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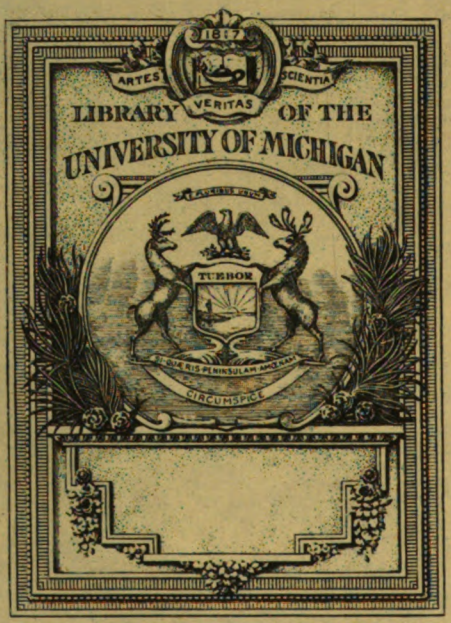

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THE

WORKS

OF

LORD BOLINGBROKE.

WITH

A LIFE,

PREPARED EXPRESSLY FOR THIS EDITION,

CONTAINING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RELATIVE TO HIS PERSONAL AND PUBLIC CHARACTER,

SELECTED FROM THE BEST AUTHORITIES.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

PHILADELPHIA:
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1841.

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ESSAY THE FOURTH:

CONCERNING

AUTHORITY IN MATTERS OF RELIGION.

CONTINUED.

SECTION XXIX.

But it is time I should return to speak of the trinity, and to show what discordant opinions arose about it among the Christians; for among the heathens, though there were different opinions, yet it was rather a secret doctrine, in which philosophers instructed their scholars behind the curtain, than a doctrine which they published to all men indifferently. Now it is impossible to conceive any thing more monstrous than some of these opinions, or more litigated, or longer unsettled than others. The least we have to observe of this kind is about the first hypostasis, and yet something of this kind is to be observed about that. For instance, though we cannot explain God's manner of being, and though to attempt it is unpardonable presumption, yet we may, and we must assert, that he is not a system of matter; because there arise, from the contrary supposition, a multitude of absurdities, that cannot destroy the demonstration of his existence, but that are inconsistent with it: notwithstanding which, the fathers of the church spoke of him sometimes, in such terms, that to make out any sense in what they said, we must understand them to have thought him material, at least not immaterial, and what they thought him then it is not possible to conceive.

But the various doctrines that were taught about the second and third hypostasis, the second especially, are still more beyond all conception extravagant and profane. Concerning these, and one or two more, it is necessary that I should descend into some

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particulars, in order to show, not only that private authority has imposed private opinions, that is, heresies, but that public authority, the authority of the whole Christian church, has imposed opinions, which are, therefore, deemed orthodox; although many of them are as absurd as any of those which are deemed heretical, many of them as disputable, many of them as little warranted by the gospel, and many of them as incompatible with true theism; because if they do not deny God, they do something as bad, nay worse in Plutarch's sense, and, in common sense, they defame him. From a consideration of some few of these opinions and doctrines, it will appear how unsafely we trust, in matters of religion, to the authority of other men, which may lead us, and has led all those who have submitted to it, under pretence of making them better Christians, to be little if at all better than atheists. From a contemplation of the consequences of these opinions and doctrines, it will appear that theology has made Christianity ridiculous to men of sense, I mean the Christianity that has been established by ecclesiastical and civil authority, and a perpetual bone of contention to fools. It will appear that the theistical objection to religion, which has been mentioned, groundless as it is, receives a color from the inventions and the conduct of that order of men, who have arrogated to themselves, exclusively of all others, the name and the power of a church, and whom Christians are accustomed to think and to call the church.

There have been reports, for such stories deserve to be esteemed no more, that Simon, who was a Samaritan, declared himself among that people to be the father, among the Jews to be the son, and among the Gentiles to be the Holy Ghost; that he passed the operations of his magical art for miracles, and that he broke his neck at last in attempting to fly before Nero, notwithstanding which he was adored at Rome. This latter circumstance, indeed, was founded on a blunder that has been since detected; though it imposed on Justin the martyr in the second century, and which is much more strange, on Erasmus* in the sixteenth. Montanus pretended to be the paraclete in the third century; or that God who had preached and suffered in Christ, inhabited by the Holy Ghost in him. The excuse he made for coming so late, when Jesus had promised that he should come so much sooner, was the unpreparedness of the world to receive any sooner that austerity of religious observances which he prescribed and practised. They were incredibly great, and such as may render it probable that this impostor died the death of the traitor Judas, that he hanged himself in a fit of despair, as Chris-

* Vid. Ep. 831, in Irenæum.

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tian writers have affirmed. Such tales as these would not deserve to be mentioned, if they did not serve to show the fanatical spirit of those ages, and to take off our wonder at all the heresies that arose in the Christian church, by observing how easy it was to suppose a divine mission, or even to assume in opinion a divine nature. The appearance of false prophets, as well as their success in seducing, had been foretold; and it was the character of the times which encouraged one, and promoted the other.

These false prophets were very numerous, and their success very various. But there was no article of Christian faith and doctrine which admitted of so much doubt and dispute as the divinity of Christ first, and his rank in the godhead afterwards. Cerinthus denied his divine nature. Menander asserted that he was a true man. Saturninus that he was only the shadow and appearance of a man. Basilides that the Christ did not suffer, but that he took the form of another, of Simon of Cyrene, I think, who suffered under his form whilst he stood by and laughed at his own supposed crucifixion. Ebion maintained, like Menander, that Christ was a mere man, the son of Joseph. In calling him a good or a just man, he had the authority of St. Peter on his side, who calls him so in one place of the Acts, and even this he did not want; but in denying his resurrection from the dead, as he did when he affirmed that the body of Christ remained in the grave, though his soul went to heaven, he had this great apostolical authority against him.* In fine, and to fill up the measure of heretical phrensy, the Sethites held that the same person had been Seth first, and was Jesus afterwards; and the Ophitæ, as they were called, that he had been the serpent who tempted Eve; so that he, who redeemed mankind by his blood, had made redemption necessary by his wiles, according to these madmen.

That there were no madmen at the same time among the best and most orthodox Christians, if it may be said with truth that any orthodox belief was settled so soon, we must not believe. There were many such, and the proofs are at hand, both in their writings, and much more in the anecdotes concerning them. But that which deserves our particular observation is, that the madness of those who are reputed orthodox never ran so high, as it did after the orthodox belief on this great article had been settled; if propositions, the very terms of which are sometimes ambiguous and sometimes quite unintelligible, may be said to have been settled. Certain it is, that after this the orthodox fathers held such language about the incarnation of Christ, as many of those who were reputed heretics would have scrupled modestly and

* —— Virum probatum à Deo, justum à mortuis suscitatum.

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piously to have used. These words, the Son of God, were understood figuratively, I presume, and not literally in the case of Foe, who assumed this appellation in India a thousand years before the coming of Christ, and in the case of Zoroaster, who assumed it in Persia, perhaps, as anciently. They must have been understood even thus very falsely, in both those cases. But they might have been so understood, with some propriety of figure, in the case of Christ, who was at least the Messiah promised by God, foretold by the prophets, and sent in due time. If this had been the judgment of the church, the principal difficulties about his incarnation had been anticipated, as they were by the Nestorians, who held that there were two persons, and not two natures only, in Christ, and who denied that the Virgin was the mother of God. But the church having determined that these words, the Son of God, should be taken in their literal sense, it is astonishing to consider what profanations followed concerning this second generation of the son; for the first had been before all worlds, that is, from all eternity. These profanations collected from the most approved writers alone, to say nothing of the creeds that are so solemnly recited in Christian churches, would fill a volume. I shall mention a few only, which they, who are at all conversant in the writings of ancient and modern divines, will acknowledge to be fairly quoted.

It has been said then by the most orthodox,* piously and reverently too, as they and other divines assure us, "that the Father having chosen the Virgin Mary for this second generation of the Son, he loved her as his spouse; he employed the angel Gabriel, whom he made his pronubus or paranymphus, that is, his brideman, to procure her consent, without which there can be no lawful marriage; and having obtained it, his virtue overshadowed her, which he tempered so that her human nature might be able to support the divine embracement. In this private embracement, she conceived, the Holy Spirit flowing into her, and producing the effect of human seed. Thus the child partook of the two natures of his parents, the divine nature of his Father, and the human nature of his mother." In such gross terms, and under such gross images, has the mystery of the incarnation been explained. The words of St. Ambrose are too obscene to be translated. Take them in Latin, therefore. "Non enim," says this modest archbishop, "virilis coitus vulvæ virginalis secreta reseravit, sed immaculatum semen inviolabili utero spiritus sanctus infudit." St. Austin softens the terms, and changes the image a little. But if he does not appear quite so obscene, he must appear at least as mad as the others. "God

* Eras. adv. ep. Lutheri.

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spoke by his angel," says this saint, "and the virgin was got with child by the ear."* There were those who asserted that Christ did not assume his body in the virgin's womb, but that he brought it from heaven, and passed through her as water passes through a pipe.† They were called heretics for their pains, and yet surely that doctrine might have been sung or said in the churches, as decently and with as much edification, as those hymns were, in one of which it was said, that the virgin conceived, "non ex virili semine, sed mystico spiramine," and in the other, that the Word or Logos entered at her ear, "et exivit per auream portam."

Such extravagant and profane notions and expressions, as have been last mentioned, came into fashion chiefly after the Nicæan council, which Constantine thought it necessary to convene. How ill he judged, and how ill his successors judged on similar occasions, long and woful experience has manifested. What passed before his time showed, that attempts to explain divine mysteries must be of necessity endless; and what passed in and after his time, that it is to no purpose, at least to no good purpose, to impose any authorised definitions of them. What revelation leaves a mystery must remain such: and there cannot be a greater absurdity than to imagine that human authority, call it how you please, ought to determine, or will determine, to submission those who think that such definitions are not conformable to their true criterion, which is the revelation itself. The only difference is this. The men who dispute and wrangle on such points as these, wherein neither morality nor good government are concerned, cannot do much hurt, if they are left to dispute and wrangle among themselves; whereas, if public authority takes notice of them so far as to meddle in their quarrels, and to decide any way, civil disorders are sure to follow, and the blood of nations is spilled in wars and massacres, to extinguish a flame which some hot-headed priest, or delirious metaphysician, has kindled, and which it does not extinguish neither.

What revelation leaves a mystery must remain such: and if any thing was ever left a mystery, the doctrine of the trinity was so. Christ had no where called himself God. His apostles called him Lord.‡ Peter had once declared him to be a man: and Paul preaching to the Athenians speaks of him rather as a man than as God. He makes no mention of the Son of God, nor of the Holy Ghost. These inconsistent writers talk often a

* Deus loquebatur per suum angelum, et virgo per aurem impregnabatur.
† Aug. de Tem. Serm.
‡ Eras. ubi supra.

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different language on the same subject, and contradict in one place what they have said in another. How they came to do so in this case, let others account; but let them account for this conduct of the apostles better than the greatest ancient and modern divines have done. According to them, Peter was afraid of scandalising the Jews. The Jews believed one God, had never heard of the Son, nor Holy Ghost, and would have been revolted against Christianity more than they were, if they had heard the man, whom they had seen crucified and buried, called God.—Paul was afraid of confirming the Gentiles in their polytheism, by preaching to them that Christ was God. The prudence of this method, by which the young in Christ were fed with milk, and those in riper years with solid food, for the whole mystery was revealed to them, has been extremely applauded by the most approved doctors of the church. I am unwilling, however, to take this for the reason of the conduct which the two apostles held. It savors too much of an outward and inward doctrine, the douhle dealing of pagan divines. It seems unworthy of men commissioned by Christ, inspired by the Holy Ghost, and able to enforce all they taught by miracles. It bears too near a resemblance to the unrighteous cunning of the Jesuits, who are said to conceal the humiliation and passion of the Saviour from their Neophites in China. But whatever reason the apostles had for it, which they who boast to be their successors have no right to determine, this was their conduct. The divinity of the Word grew by slow degrees into general belief among Christians: the divinity of the Holy Ghost by degrees still slower, and the coequality and consubstantiality of the three hypostases last of all. It fared with the Son, in the first ages of Christianity, much as it has fared since with the mother of God. Strong figurative expressions, which the apostles employed on some, which other doctors and saints employed on all occasions, and which were animated, doubtless, by the opposition of heathens, Jews and heretics, might contribute to exalt the Son at the expense of the Father's supremacy; as we know very certainly that by such means and on such motives as these the virgin acquired the title of deipara, to whom, if she is not a goddess avowed in express terms, divine honors are paid, and her intercession is implored with the father and the son. She is so plainly distinguished from both, that her intercession with either carries more propriety along with it, than the intercession of the son with the father; since these two consubstantial persons cannot be intelligibly distinguished from one another, and since it is of the utmost absurdity to advance that the same person intercedes with himself.

What has been said will appear evidently true, if we look into

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the anecdotes of the apostolical and following ages; or if we consult, with due discernment, those who have made them their study. Many of the primitive Christians, struck with religious awe, had a very reasonable scruple of using any appellations which were not contained in the Scriptures. Many of them dared not to give that of the true God to Christ before the Nicean council, nor several after it: and even the most orthodox, who scrupled not to call him very God of very God, begotten not made, when the council had pronounced, were still afraid to give this appellation to the Holy Ghost. Nay from the time that the Macedonians were condemned soon after the Arians, in another council, and even to this hour, the Holy Ghost has not been deemed God by generation, but by procession or spiration, that is, by the breathing of the Father through the Son, or by joint breathing of the Father and the Son; of which difference in an identity of nature we must be content to say what Erasmus said, "satis est credere." In short, the orthodox doctrine of the trinity was never taught explicitly and positively by any divine authority. It was a vague opinion in heathen theology, which intended no more, perhaps, than to personify the wisdom and goodness of the supreme omnipotent Being. It has been a theological dispute in all ages among Christians, and the precise definition, according to which we are obliged to profess that we believe it, is founded on authority entirely human, and therefore undeniably fallible, imperial and ecclesiastical authority.

If it be said, that the decisions in favor of the second and third hypostases have been made by councils, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, I shall only say, the question is begged ridiculously, when the influence of the Holy Ghost is supposed to prove the very point in dispute, his divinity; and that they therefore, must have no small share of stupidity, of ignorance, and effrontery, who can insist on such an answer in this age. If it be said that the councils, which condemned the opinions of Paul of Samosata, of Sabellius, of Arius, of Photinus, and of other heretics, were guided, in the canons they made, and the anathemas they pronounced, by the unerring rule of Scripture and uniform tradition; I shall only ask what that Scripture was? It was not the Old Testament most surely; for there is no reason to allow that this Testament contains any notices of the trinity. Was it the New Testament? But we may defy the ablest chemist that ever worked on those materials, to extract from them such a trinity, as that is which the Christian church acknowledges. Passages that seem favorable to it, in part, may be, as they have been, produced. But then passages that are really inconsistent with it, in the whole, may be, as they have been, opposed to these: and the famous adjective homoûsios will

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not be found consecrated by Scripture language; though even this word does not signify very determinately what it has been applied to signify, if identity alone be the greatest, and similitude but a less unity, as the learned say.* As little grounds are there, in any part of the New Testament, even in the epistles of St. Paul, for that impudent analysis which school divines and others have presumed to make of the Deity when they have talked so much nonsense about processions or emanations, persons, relations, notions, or terms, and the indwelling of these divine beings in one another. Certain figurative and vague expressions, of which there are many, have been picked up here and there, and have been dragged to countenance, if that was possible, such opinions. Theology has solemnised the reveries of enthusiasm in many instances. Let me quote one that occurs immediately to me. Ignatius, disciple of St. John, and bishop of Antioch, was brought before Trajan. The emperor inquired who he was. The saint answered, that he was one who had gained the friendship of the Son of God, whom he carried about in his breast; as he might well do, since it was written, "I will dwell and walk in them." Trajan condemned this theophorus, or god-carrier, to be exposed to wild beasts at Rome. It is not necessary that I should make any applications of this story to what I have said of enthusiasm and theology. Almost daily experience will make them for me.

Not only the Scriptures, which are come down to us, are very far from being vouchers of the trinity we profess to believe; but we may assure ourselves, that many of the Scriptures and traditions, that obtained credit in the primitive ages of Christianity, deposed against this trinity. Scriptures stood in opposition to Scriptures, and tradition was not uniform. There were various gospels, and various epistles. All these were composed and altered, received and rejected, according to the different traditions, and the different systems of evangelical history and doctrine, that prevailed in different places, and among different persons. Thus, for instance, Epiphanius owns, that Sabellius, who denied any distinction of persons in the Godhead, took his doctrine from the gospel of the Egyptians; and the Socinians of our age may boast, that they derive their pedigree from Paul of Samosata, a great bishop of the third century. This century, the latter part of it especially, may be included in that character which Erasmus gives of the fourth, and which will suit some others. "It was matter of ingenuity to be a Christian. Faith rather in the writings than in the minds of men: and there were

* ——Consimilis essentia.—Eras. Identitas maxima est unitas: minor unitas est similitudo.—Mart. Lexic.

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almost as many creeds as persons that professed Christianity." The disputes concerning the divinity of Christ continued from the apostolical days to these, without any ecumenical decision. Then, indeed, there was one given by the council of Nicæa, which did not, however, decide, for a long time, nor even at last, by Scripture and tradition, but by dint of persecution, and by the force of the secular arm.

It has been said, that the greatest lights, which appeared in the Christian church after the apostles, appeared in and about the fourth century, to the end of which century, at least, I think that we protestants concur, not very wisely, with you papists in reverencing fathers and councils. This judgment I shall not contradict, however, on the present occasion. But then we must make it more impartially than it is generally made. For instance, Athanasius, Gregory of Nazianze, Chrysostom, Ambrosius, Augustin, Jerom, were men of some parts and learning with extraordinary zeal. But so were Arius, Eusebius of Nicomedia, the other Eusebius of Cæsarea, Photinus, and Macedonius. That such men as these should be divided, in their opinions concerning the trinity, cannot seem strange to any person who considers the nature of this doctrine, how it came into the church, how it grew up there, and how open to dispute it remained three hundred years after Christ. To believe three gods, three substances essentially different, or three subsistences, as they were called by some, in the god-head, distinct and subordinate, the second to the first, and the third to the second, was not hard on the principles of heathen theology, in which such a trinity had been taught. But on the principle of Jewish and Christian theology, such a belief could not be admitted without manifest inconsistency; and it is not conceivable, that Philo could reconcile Plato and Moses, when he talked of a second god. To save this inconsistency, and to avoid as much as possible all appearance of polytheism, several expedients were devised. Some, like Sabellius and his master Noëtus, denied a distinction of persons in the god head: so that God the father was, in the system of these heretics, as it is said, his own son, and God the son his own father; nay the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost suffered together in the passion and person of Christ, since they were but one person under three notions and appellations. Some, like Paul of Samosata before the Nicæan council, and Photinus at that time, or immediately after it, maintained that Jesus was called the Son of God only on account of his sanctity; that the word descended on him, and then returned to the Father; and that he did not commence the Christ, till he had been baptised in the Jordan.

As some were afraid of destroying the unity by the trinity,

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others were afraid of destroying the trinity by the unity. Arius thought to save both, by opposing the unitarians, who took away all distinction of persons, and the trinitarians, who held, that they were all equal. He made the distinction of persons as strong as he could, in contradiction to the former, and he was so far from acceding to the latter, that he denied the Son to be either in rank or nature equal to the Father, and the Holy Ghost to be so even to the Son. The strict trinitarians, who became afterwards the sole orthodox, might hold the Father to be alone eternal in this sense, "quod careat origine;" for "duæ personæ ab ipso sunt, ipse a nullo." So Hilarius expressed himself. But he and the rest of them believed an eternal generation of the Son, and procession of the Holy Spirit, who had no beginning in time, though they had an original in nature, the nature of the Father. The Arians, on the other hand, denied this community of nature, held the Father alone to be the Supreme God, and the Son to be the first of all creatures, but a created being. If this doctrine had become orthodox, as it did very nearly, notwithstanding the decision of the Nicæan council, the Macedonians would have formed no sect. The divinity of the second hypostasis failing, that of the third would have fallen of course; which it is plain that Arius saw, when he urged nothing, and the Nicæan council added nothing to the creed concerning the Holy Ghost. But the heretics of those days were so afraid of admitting any co-equality with the Supreme Being, that they opposed the divinity of the third hypostasis, even after that of the second had been established. They were easily defeated. The same sort of proof as had served in one dispute served in the other: and though the orthodox themselves distinguished generation from procession, yet the Scripture joining the Son and the Holy Ghost so often together, and Christ having ordered baptism to be administered in the name of the Holy Ghost as well as of the Father and the Son, the divinity of the Holy Ghost was confirmed, and these councils employed, very wisely, authority instead of argument. It was impossible, indeed, to show, by any subtilty of logic, that this doctrine was not polytheistical; since the admission of three, or of three hundred gods, is equally so. There remained, therefore, nothing to be done, but to make a mystery where they found none: and having decreed, that there are three gods, to decree at the same time that there is but one; for so the Athanasian doctrine must sound to every man who does not comprehend, and that is every man living, all the profound metaphysics that have been employed to distinguish away the apparent contradiction, unless he gives his understanding up to a jargon of words, and can fancy he believes without any clear and distinct ideas.

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In this manner was the fundamental article of Christianity imposed at first, without a plain and harmonical concurrence of the Scriptures, or of tradition; though such a concurrence, at least, was necessary to make it a revealed doctrine, and of divine obligation. It continues to be imposed still: and there is but too much reason to apprehend, that these theological attempts to persuade mankind that three distinct persons in the Godhead make but one God, have induced some to believe that there is no God at all: just as the pretensions of heathen philosophers, to knowledge really unattainable, induced several to assert, that there is no knowledge at all. If I was to write the history of Arianism, it would be a part of my subject to show, with how much difficulty the orthodox doctrine prevailed against it; how it revived often, even under Constantine, much more under some of his successors; and was, at last, drowned in the blood of those who professed it. The Athanasians and the Arians were, in some respects, like the Prasini and the Veneti. The principal difference between the first was in the words they used, and between the last in the colors they wore. Neither the divines, nor the chariot drivers, were left to contend by themselves in the schools, and in the circus. Men, women, children, all the world, took part on one side or the other. The state was disordered by the circensian, and the church and the state both by the synodical contests. The civil power, which should have put both down, kept both up: and magistrates were as partial in one case, and as bigot in the other, as the vulgar. It were to be wished, that the comparison would hold in one circumstance more; for, in the reign of Justinian, the Prasini and the Veneti were both abolished.

SECTION XXX.

The accounts we have of Athanasius and of Arius are come to us in the writings of the former, and of those of the same party, and, therefore, may be deemed extremely partial, as they are extremely violent: and yet very little sagacity is necessary to discover, even in them, that the saint had less moderation, and not less ambition, than the heretic; that he had the spirit of intrigue, as much as Eusebius of Nicomedia; and that he was one of those churchmen, whom pride and obstinacy of temper, under the name of zeal, render equally fit to persecute, and to bear persecution. The authority of the persons, who were at the head of this dispute, deserves, in a word, no consideration. But as the Athanasian doctrine was confirmed by the first and all

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other councils, except a very few, it may be proper to inquire what regard these councils deserve. Now as to that, we may say boldly, because we can prove invincibly, that they deserve none; whether we judge of them analogously to those that have been held in our time, or near it, or whether we judge of these primitive councils by what we know of them from cotemporary, and the most orthodox authority.

The first attempt to silence Arius, and to condemn his doctrine, was in a provincial council held at Alexandria. The letters Osius carried thither from Constantine seemed calculated rather to compose and reconcile, than to animate and condemn. This was certainly the aim of Eusebius, of Nicomedia, in whom Constantine had much confidence, that of the emperor himself, and not improbably, that of Osius too. This council had not been unanimous in their subscriptions, and nothing had been formally decided against Arius in it. But yet I think that the terms, which made so much noise in the Nicæan council afterwards, were employed in this; the terms I mean of one nature or substance, and three persons or subsistences; for it was grown to be a point of honor among most of the prelates and great men of the church, not to suffer that the founder of their religion should pass for any thing less than a God, even the Supreme God. This circumstance might encourage Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria, or rather his prompter Athanasius; and Arius might think it a victory not to be soon defeated. He might think, that if his doctrine could stand the first brunt of opposition, it had as fair a chance of becoming orthodox as the other. Thus the dispute continued, and the disorders occasioned by it at Alexandria, where it was carried on with open violence. It spread; it gained the court. The influence of the clergy on private conscience, and the influence of private conscience on public tranquillity, began to show themselves in a dangerous manner. Constantine saw, and apprehended the consequences. To prevent them, he resolved to call together a general council, and to preside in it; for so in effect he did. He flattered himself, that an ecclesiastical dispute would be best determined in an ecclesiastical assembly; and that a parcel of wrangling priests would be silenced by a synod representative of their whole order. He resolved to support their decrees, whatever they should be; about which it is plain enough, both by the language aud the conduct he held, that he was much less solicitous, than he was to have any decision that might put an end to the dispute: for which purpose there is room to suspect, that he took, among others, one method, rather political than fair. I say, that there is room to suspect this. I dare say no more in opposition to

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that profusion of learning, which has been employed to defend the first Nicæan council, and to prove the doctrine of the trinity that was settled in it to be an ecumenical decision. Mr. Selden published in Latin, from an Arabian manuscript, the antiquities of the church of Alexandria, written by Eutychius, a famous patriarch of that church, in the ninth or tenth century. Now this author having given a list of these patriarchs, from Hanarias, a cobbler, who was the first of them, down to Alexander, who was the eighteenth, relates, that Constantine summoned a council at Nicæa to determine the dispute between this patriarch and Arius. The council consisted, he says, of two thousand and forty-eight, whereof three hundred and eighteen were unanimous in declaring the divinity of Christ. The rest were divided by a great number of different opinions, "sententiarum discrimine multiplici;" they could not agree among themselves, but they all opposed the three hundred and eighteen. Selden produces two authorities more, to confirm that of Eutychius: the authority of Joseph, an Egyptian presbyter, in his preface to a version of the councils into Arabic, from ancient Christian monuments; and that of Ismael Ibn Ali, a Mahometan historian of reputation. They speak to the same effect: and by the concurrent testimony of all three, the orthodox doctrine of the trinity was not that of the whole council, nor of a majority of the fathers. It seems to have been rather a profession of faith drawn up by the bishop of Jerusalem for the emperor, "quam descripserat ei episc. Hierosolymit." The emperor had it read in the synod: three hundred and eighteen approved it out of the whole number: these were unanimous, the rest could agree in nothing, "nec inter se concordes, nec in fide suâ." It was necessary to the design of Constantine, therefore, that the decision of a party in the council should pass for an ecumenical decision. On the whole, there is room for the suspicion that I have mentioned; for if it should be objected, that these testimonies were given some centuries after the events happened, the same objection may be made to the most approved of Greek and Roman, Jewish and Christian, ecclesiastical and civil, sacred and profane antiquities, as Mr. Selden observes. Eutychius and Joseph were learned antiquaries, they were both orthodox. They wanted no materials, and their bias was strongly in favor of the Nicæan council. Eutychius declares his approbation of the doctrine, and Joseph compares the three hundred and eighteen to the angels for their excellency, and to the stars for their splendor. The prejudices of these men were in favor of the doctrine and council, to both of which the Mahometan historian must have been very indifferent: and, in this particular respect, his testimony may

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be deemed more credible than that either of Athanasius, or of Arius, would be.*

If Constantine flattered himself that this expedient would impose an uniform belief, the event showed that he was much deceived. Such disputes are in their nature not determinable: and all attempts to determine them by dogmatical decisions are palliative remedies, of as bad consequence as no decision at all, and of worse when a submissiou to them is exacted by fraud, or force and violence. He was not yet acquainted with the pertinacious spirit of the clergy, who never gave up a point which ambition or interest, enthusiasm or humor has made any of them advance; though the peace of mankind and the lives of millious be at stake, in a quarrel that concerns neither natural religion nor even the essentials of revealed religion. Experience soon informed him better; for though Arianism was condemned, and the reverend fathers racked their brains to find out words that might establish not a similitude of the Son to the Father, but a sameness and consubstantiality with him, nay though the chiefs of the sect seemed to submit to the authority of the council, like the bishops of Nicomedia and Cæsarea, yet the Arians were Arians still. They seemed to submit to it; but in truth they submitted to that of the emperor, who would have a decision at any rate. The council made no converts. He made some hypocrites, who answered his purpose enough, by playing with words so dextrously as to adopt Athanasian terms and retain Arian opinions.

How should the authority of this council have any weight with those who thought like Arius, when it had none with those who thought like Athanasius? And it had none even with the very best of these. Notwithstanding the zeal of St. Gregory of Nazianze for the Nicæan doctrine, it is evident that it had none with him. He maintained his opinions as independently of this council, to which they were conformable, as Arius could maintain his, that stood in direct opposition to it. How else can we account for what he says in a letter to Procopius? "I am determined," says the saint speaking of councils, "to avoid all such assemblies for the future." He declares that he "had not seen any council whose conclusion had been happy, nor who had

* N. B. Since I have mentioned Mahometan testimonies concerning the establishment of the trinitarian doctrine, may I not be allowed to observe, that this doctrine gives the Mahometans as much reason to say that the revelation which Mahomet published was necessary to establish the unity of the Supreme Being, in opposition to the polytheism which Christianity had introduced, as Christians have to insist that the revelation which Christ published a few centuries before, was necessary to establish the unity of the Godhead against pagan polytheism?

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done more to cure than to increase and aggravate evils." He speaks in other places to the same effect. But what he says in his book about bishops, to whose characters he was much less favorable, though he was a bishop, than St. Jerom was to their order, and what he says in some of his orations or sermons, particularly in his farewell sermon, when he quitted his bishopric and retired to his solitude, go to the bottom of this matter, and show how impossible it was that a council could be assembled in this famous fourth century, when so many important articles of faith were settled, that deserved any more regard than that of Trent. Men were raised to the episcopal dignity too easily, he says, without regard to their morals, and without any other merit than a great desire to be bishops. The ignorance of these, however, was the least evil; for there were others who became the *ludibria*, may-games of life, indifferent about the faith, and ready to take any side, followers of the modes and customs of the times, not of the laws of God. Lions to their inferiors, but fawning dogs to the great. He continues. When they have nothing else to boast, they boast of their very iniquity. This is that mystery of iniquity, which has overspread almost the whole world. He describes some of these pastors of the church indulging themselves in all the effeminate luxury of the age, and patrons of their own vices in the vices of others, giving others leave to sin that they might sin with greater license themselves. He paints, in a sort of contrast with these, some who put off their brass for gold, who wore long beards, solemn countenances, and modest habits; whose heads were reclined, their walk and gesture as composed, as their mien and their voice soft and gentle, "vocem pertenuem." They affected wisdom in all their outward air, but they had none in their minds, where it should principally reside. He compares the noise and confusion of their assemblies to those of the circus and the theatre. He complains that they were iniquitous and absurd judges of things; "iniqui et absurdi rerum judices." That names directed their hatred and their friendship; and that they did not blush to contradict themselves before the same auditory. In short, he congratulates himself that he should sit no longer among those cranes and geese. He leaves them to their thrones and tyranny. He bids them be insolent by themselves. He bids them adieu. "Valete, pergite. Ego me ad Deum convertam," says the saint.

I might collect many more anecdotes like these from the writings of St. Gregory, and might strengthen them too by other very orthodox authorities both before and after his time: by that of St. Cyprian, for instance, who wrote about a century before, as high an opinion as he entertained and propagated of bishops and of the whole ecclesiastical order; and by that of Sulpitius

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Severus, who wrote about a century after his time. I will quote the last particularly, because it occurs to my memory as I am writing, and is very short. Sulpitius Severus, a zealous Christian of the fifth century, says, that in his time the best of the clergy,* those who did not addict themselves to trade and usury, nor live in fine houses, nor attend to the improvement of their great estates, did something worse; that they waited for presents which were made to them, and disgraced the dignity of their ministry by a venal sanctity, and by the price they set on the exercise of

* Though I have not quoted St. Cyprian as particularly as I have quoted St. Gregory of Nazianze, in the text, it may be proper to do so in this note, that you may see the character of the Christians, and even of the martyrs or confessors of the third century, as fully as you have seen that of the bishops and councils of the fourth century. St. Cyprian then speaks to this purpose in his book "De Lapsis:" that the Christians of his age were given up to insatiable avarice; that the clergy were unsound in their faith, and licentious in their manners; that the men were effeminate, and disgraced their beards; that the women were coquet and lewd; for he accuses them here of prostituting their members,* that is, the members of Christ to the Gentiles; and, somewhere else, of lying with the Christian priests. He says, that not only rash swearing, but perjury, insolent contempt of their superiors, poisonous malice, and obstinate hatred prevailed among the generality of Christians. He says, in particular, that many bishops, despising their holy function, were taken up with secular affairs; that they deserted their flocks, wandered into the provinces of others, traded, exercised usury, got fraudulently into the possession of estates to which they had no right, grew rich, and left the poor to starve. Such was the purity of an age famous for martyrs and confessors, and at the same time, for the greatest dissolution of manners. Nay, even confessors themselves fell into the same dissolution, and were guilty of the most abominable crimes, "fraudes, stupra, et adulteria," as the saint assures us in his famous and favorite book, "De Unitate Ecclesiæ." He adds, that injustice, insolence, and perfidy might be learned of these confessors, and he cautious Christians against following their examples, "nemo——de confessoris moribus discat." Such was the clerical order; such were those martyrs or confessors, who obtained by their sufferings the greatest fame and authority in the church, at a time when many articles of faith were determined, and many more were on the point of being determined in the next century. As little credit as Cyprian may deserve in other cases, he deserves much in this; for he advances nothing improbable, nothing which must not have been of public notoriety when he wrote. It may seem strange, indeed, that so great a stickler as he was, for episcopal dignity and authority, and for the pre-eminence of the religious over the civil society, should transmit such a character of them to posterity. But this may be accounted for, perhaps, by assuming, for I grow very apt to assume, by conversing so much with ecclesiastical writers, who assume much oftener than they prove, that the saint applied to every bishop especially, and even to every priest, what modern divines applied to the pope, when they maintained, in the case of Julius the Second, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, that no vices whatever could degrade this dignity, nor lessen this authority, unless there was a suspicion of heresy.†

* Prostituère gentilibus membra Christi——cum viris, iisque clericis concumbentium.

† Vid. Guicciardin, at the end of his ninth book.

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it. These complaints were not arrows shot in the dark. All of them were published at the time. Some of the keenest were so in a sermon preached, before the whole court and people of Constantinople, in the church of Sancta Sophia. They are more than sufficient, therefore, to take away all that respect for councils, even for the Nicæan, which has been sounded so high by divines in all ages from the fourth downwards. They may serve likewise to take off our wonder at all the revolutions to which the orthodox doctrine of the trinity was exposed in an age when councils contradicted councils; when four or five hundred fathers of the church, for I think there was so many at Rimini, to say nothing of the council of Seleucia and others, could prevaricate about a doctrine so lately established, and when Arianism could revive in this short space of time so much as to make one orthodox doctor * complain that, except a few, who were of his party you may be sure, all the rest of the ten provinces of Asia had not the true knowledge of God; and another,† that the world was surprised to find itself Arian. "Miratus est orbis se esse Arianum:" in short, when not only a great number of the "gens linigera," the surplice-wearing crowd, but Liberius the bishop of Rome, and that great column of orthodoxy, Osius, became fautors of the Arians.

The truth is, that whether laymen came into these synods or not, as St. Gregory of Nazianzen complains bitterly that they did, the spirit of the court was the spirit that directed the determinations of councils. A succession of princes like Valens would have made the whole Roman empire Arian. A succession of princes like Julian might have made it pagan again. But a succession of princes like Theodosius, like him, at least, in his religious character, banished Arianism to the Goths, among whom it was at last extinguished by Recaredus in Spain, though not by means as gentle as Mariana would insinuate. If Christianity was not propagated, as the religion of Mahomet was, yet is it true to say that the system of Christian theology, which has passed for the Christian religion ever since, and has done so much hurt under that notion, was established by the sword, and by every kind of persecution.

The orthodox opinion concerning the divinity of Jesus had two advantages over the other, which could not, as I think they did not, fail to produce great effects on all those who were zealously affected to Christianity, or who desired, for any reason religious or political, to maintain the fervor of others. The first of these advantages was this. The orthodox belief gave a greater lustre to Christianity. If the other came more nearly to

* St. Hilary. † St. Jerom.

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the truth, and contradicted human reason less, yet this held out more of the marvellous: and the marvellous in matters of religion, that is presumed to be revealed, will impose and affect more than truth and reason. This was an advantage which the ablest of the fathers saw and improved: and therefore some of them always maintained it with a zeal, which would have been called heretical obstinacy, if they had not happened to be declared orthodox at last, against those who were willing to soften certain terms for the sake of peace and union; and they preferred to both these the keeping it entire. They succeeded. They took every other advantage that the course of events, offered, or intrigue could procure; they improved them all by this, and they transmitted to posterity the orthodox doctrine after many struggles.

Every able man saw and improved this advantage; but the other was of a nature to make itself felt by every man who embraced Christianity, for it proceeded from the pride of the human heart. That the Supreme Being should send an inferior being, who was for that reason called his son, to redeem mankind, and to give them a more perfect law, might be thought sufficient to satisfy divine justice, that required, according to them, a victim to be offered up, and even an honor more than sufficient done to creatures whom he had placed in the lowest rank of intelligent beings and moral agents. But that he should send his son, who was consubstantial with himself, in glory equal, in majesty coeternal, to fulfil such purposes as these, might be thought such a mark of favor and predilection as raised the sons of men to a much higher rank in the scale of being. Agreeably to this notion, we find that the angel in the Apocalypse would not suffer St. John to adore him, but declared himself a fellow servant to the evangelist, and to all those who had the testimony of Jesus.* This respect was not shown even to Abraham, nor Daniel, before the incarnation of Christ and the redemption of man, which is a mystery that the angels acknowledge and reverence.† They acknowledge it, and by that they acknowledge the dignity of the human nature. Thus far Erasmus‡ carries the observation. But a right reverend arshbishop§ of our church carries it much farther, at the close of one of his sermons, where he observes very pathetically, that when the angels fell, God left them in their fallen state; but when man fell, he sent his son, his only begotten, his dearly beloved son, to redeem the race by his

* Vide ne feceris, conservus tuus sum, et fratrum tuorum habentium testimonium Jesu.—Apoc. c. xix.

† —— In quem desiderent angeli prospicere.—St. Peter, 1 ep. c. 1.

‡ Cateches. 6. § Tillotson.

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sufferings and passion. One of these divines raises us to an equality with the angels, the other to a superiority over them.

There are a multitude of other instances, ready to be brought, wherein fathers of the church and councils have imposed their own imaginations, and, perhaps, their mistakes, for revealed doctrines and divine truths, cursing and persecuting all those who dissented from them. These instances do not fall within the bounds I have set to myself. One of them, however, shall be just mentioned, because it has been the subject of much controversy, and the cause of much disorder in many countries, and is so at this time in France. Our countryman Pelagius appeared in the beginning of the fifth century. He was called the Britannic serpent. His first antagonist was the surly foul-mouthed controversist Jerom: his greatest was Austin. He was condemned by councils, and excommunicated by popes. But he was a great genius, a great divine, and a great philosopher; and if he was too much a Stoician in his theology, he might have reproached those who opposed him, St. Austin particularly, for mingling too much Platonism in theirs. The principal objection to his doctrine was, that he ascribed too much to free will, and nothing to grace. But it may be, that if he magnified too highly the sufficiency of one, he extenuated, rather than rejected, the use and efficacy of the other. The semi-pelagians at least, who dissented from the African bishop about predestination and grace, avoided the extreme into which Pelagius was understood to go, and maintained a necessary concurrence of free will and grace; by which they avoided the absurd circular reasoning of those who make faith necessary to obtain grace, and grace necessary to produce faith. Man was to co-operate with God in their theology, and salvation was open to all who did so.—This doctrine appears moderate, reasonable, and no way repugnant to the ideas of divine justice and goodness; whereas that of an absolute predestination, of election and reprobation is scandalously so. A Jew accustomed to believe that God had chosen one nation to be his peculiarly, and exclusively of all others, might fall easily into an opinion, that a divine partiality for particular men had succeeded and taken the place of a divine partiality for a particular nation. But it has been, and it must be always, very impolitic in divines to fix such blasphemy on the great master of their artificial theology, if St. Paul may be understood naturally and coherently in another sense. The apostle meaned, as Locke* explains his meaning not very naturally perhaps, nor coherently, to assert the right which God has over all the nations of the earth, to raise and to favor one, to depress

* Vid. Locke, in his Paraph. and notes, 7.

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and reject another, according to his good pleasure and the impenetrable secrets of his providence. The Jews were rejected nationally, because they refused nationally to receive the Messiah. But those of them who received him were not included in this rejection. He had chosen them nationally by virtue of his sovereignty. By virtue of the same, he had rejected them nationally likewise: but of personal election or rejection among those who embraced Christianity, and so became the people of God instead of the Jews, the apostle had no intention to speak, if this expositor guesses well. Thus indeed we must understand St. Paul, to reconcile his doctrine a little to common sense,* to common equity, and to such notions of the divine perfections as it would be much more impious to disbelieve, than to disbelieve him. But St. Austin thought fit to understand him otherwise, and to believe the apostle according to his own interpretation of some passages, in defiance of common sense, common equity, and true theism. St. Austin, whom other fathers and councils have followed, St. Luther, St. Calvin, and St. Jansenius, have supposed a mystery where there is none, except in the style of a writer the least precise and clear that ever wrote: and under pretence of explaining this mystery they have blasphemed, as St. Paul himself did, if his sense was theirs. They have made a god, such as no one, who knows what he says, when he says he believes a god, can acknowledge: and they impute to him, what they who believe a devil might impute with great propriety to that wicked spirit. This strange and impious doctrine has been transmitted to us from the fifth century, and though disputed by some, is held in general to be orthodox. They who agree in little else, agree in this. Jansenists, Lutherans, Calvinists, and I am sorry to say that the divines of our church, who are better theists than to adopt so abominable a doctrine, are obliged to swear that they do, when they subscribe the thirty-

* I say a little; because it may be observed, that when Mr. Locke asserts, on this occasion, that God proceeds to favor or reject nations arbitrarily, and by the right of his sovereignty alone, without any regard to their moral character, he prostitutes still, in some degree, that of God himself, and sacrifices a great deal too much to his respect for St. Paul. In order to soften the absurdity of the apostle, who meant, as it appears plainly enough by the context, notwithstanding this ingenious device, just what Calvin supposed him to mean, he destroys the great sanction of natural law, by which the virtues of societies tend necessarily to their prosperity, and the vices to their misery. Surely this doctrine of absolute predestination, and that of unlimited passive obedience, are doctrines of the utmost absurdity, though taught by this apostle; with this difference however, that one teaches us to submit to the arbitrary will of man, and the other, that God proceeds in his government, as human tyrants do, by arbitrary will. One is absurd: the other both absurd and impious.

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nine articles. Whether St. Paul intended to teach it is made to some persons, but I confess not to myself, doubtful: that St. Austin did, and that Christ did not, teach it, is certain; and yet this doctrine is one of those which theology has imposed for a Christian doctrine, and by which the peace of the world has been disturbed in every age of the church. The truth is, that the church has been in every age an hydra, such a monster as the poets feign with many heads. All these heads hissed and barked and tore one another with fury. As fast as some were cut off, others sprouted out, and all the art and all the violence employed to create an apparent, could never create a real, uniformity. The scene of Christianity has been always a scene of dissension, of hatred, of persecution, and of blood.

SECTION XXXI.

This the atheists object, and Christians cannot deny. It is necessary, therefore, in order to justify the Christian religion from this reproach, that we proceed to show, by instances still stronger and more modern than those that have been already produced, how these disturbances, far from being the natural effects of religion, have proceeded solely from the constitution of the Christian church, by which the peace of the world was laid, in the first ages of Christianity, and still lies at the mercy of an order of men, who indulge their passions, and find their account several ways in disturbing it. We have proved, by undeniable evidence, that the whole body of the clergy, some few good and learned but not infallible men excepted, was ignorant, contentious, and profligate; and that councils were riotous assemblies, governed by intrigue, and celebrated with noise, confusion, and the greatest indecency. This was the state of the church in the fourth century: and it did not grow better, if it could not grow worse, afterwards. On the contrary, as learning and knowledge decreased in the latter empire, the imposition of ecclesiastical authority grew up to such a height, and were so confirmed in their course of nine centuries at least, that when learning revived, though they were detected, they could not be exploded. A Christian church, for I use the word here in the improper but common acceptation of it, having been established in the empire by Constantine, as well as the Christian religion, and both of them being supposed to have the same divine original, the power and discipline of one became as independent of the civil authority, as the doctrines of the other. According to this system, the clergy did not compose, in the empire nor out of it, wherever they were admitted, an order belonging to the state that admitted them; nor

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incorporated with it, as a member of the same body, independent on it as a subject. But they composed, more properly, an order distinct from it, the member of another body, the subject of another state. Churchmen were busy and troublesome inmates, in every family where they were received. They lived at the expense of it, they acquired government in it, and they had often an interest contrary to it. This was the case whilst the empire continued entire. The authority of the empire extended itself over many provinces and different states. So did that of the church. Even the conquerors of one were conquered by the other. Thus it happened in the West, if not in the East, and the Goths Christianised, if the Saracens did not. When the empire was broken to pieces, the church remained entire, and the same ecclesiastical authority and discipline subsisted, where the same imperial authority and government were no longer acknowledged.

But it is necessary I should show you, in some particulars, the truth of what is advanced, in general.——Whilst the Christians were a sect in the empire, they had private judicatures of their own, and they avoided the pagan tribunals, not only because they might think that it was below the dignity of saints to submit to be tried by them, but chiefly because it was prudent to conceal from unbelievers that Christians went to law with Christians, and that notwithstanding the sanctity of their professions, the greatest crimes, even that of incest, were practised among them. That these were their reasons, is plain from what St. Paul writes to the Corinthians in the fifth and sixth chapters of his first epistle. Though absent in body, yet present with them in spirit, he judges the incestuous man, and delivers him over to Satan. Neither he, nor they, had any right to judge those who were out of the church. But they had a right to judge those who were in it, or they pretended to have it. Incest might have been punished by a pagan judge. But the incest of a Christian was to be punished by Christians, as far as they could punish by excommunicating and delivering over to the devil, but even thus in order to the salvation of the criminal; that the spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus, though the flesh be destroyed. St. Paul asks, "dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, that is, the heathens, and not before the saints, that is, your fellow Christians? Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" After which, the apostle directs such as have any controversy together to take the meanest or most contemptible Christian for their judge, rather than to go to the tribunals of the impious. I understand the passage, as Erasmus explains it, more agreeably to the drift of this whole argumentation than others. St. Austin,

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he says, gave it the same sense; but I wonder this judicious critic did not observe how absurdly the saint reasoned, when he thought he was obliged, by this passage, to take upon himself the judgment of causes, because he was a bishop.* The reasoning of St. Paul, however excellent in his time, could not be applicable in that of St. Austin. The empire was then become Christian. The saints were judged by saints, in the public tribunals; and the apprehension of giving scandal to the heathen was a vain pretence, on many accounts.

The truth is, that there was in those days, what has been seen very often since among the clergy, a sort of holy ambition, which proved as strong a motive in the hearts of good men transported by a mistaken zeal for the church, whose cause they confounded with the cause of religion, as that profane ambition which meant nothing more than to advance, under pious pretences, the grandeur, wealth, and dominion of the religious over the civil society, was in the hearts of hypocrites and knaves. Innumerable such examples charity will incline us to believe that there have been and without going farther than our own country and the last age, such Laud seems to me to have been, an ambitious, tyrannical priest, but a pious man.

These two sorts of ambition helped one another mutually. Neither of them could have done so well alone; but both concurring, from very different motives, they soon established a church as independent on the state, as conjunctures well improved, and the characters of princes well managed could make it. The emperors were mostly favorable to them, for one of these two reasons, and sometimes for both. As far as bigotry prevailed, they looked on the constitution of the church to be of the same divine original as the doctrines of it. They received the former on the faith of those from whom they received the latter. They had as good authority for the one as for the other; and however the clergy might differ about points of doctrine, and some of discipline, the whole order agreed to inculcate the same respect for the hierarchy, or the holy principality, that is, for their own order. Christ had established his church on the model of the Jewish. The near correspondence of ecclesiastical polity, under both dispensations, showed a sameness of original; and the near correspondence of the terrestrial hierarchy, with that which had been imagined in heaven, proved that it was divine. All this was showish. It passes now. It might well pass then. But yet, I think, there was another reason for favoring the church, which the emperors felt more sensibly.

* Divus Augustinus, in libro de opere monachorum, ait sese ex hoc Pauli loco cogi ad suscipienda judicia causarum, quum esset episcopus.

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The notion of a formal alliance between the church and the state, as between two independent distinct powers, is a very groundless and whimsical notion.* But a fraudulent or silent compact between princes and priests became very real, as soon as an ecclesiastical order was established. The emperors admitted and reverenced, or appeared to reverence the divine right of the clergy. The clergy, in return, made use of their influence over consciences to establish an opinion of a divine right in them. They were no longer deified after death, as they had been whilst the emperor was pagan; but they were made sacred

* I have heard of a sermon preached by one Doctor Senior, a fellow of Trinity College, in Cambridge, before King Charles the Second, at Newmarket, in the days of passive obedience and non-resistance, and afterwards printed. His text was taken from the 14th, 15th, and 16th verses of the 4th chapter of Exodus, or some of them, wherein God directs Moses to take Aaron, the Levite, because he knew that Aaron could speak well to the people, and joins them together in commission, that they might assist one another mutually; that Aaron might be instead of a mouth to Moses, and that Moses might be instead of God to Aaron. What other applications the good Doctor made of these texts I know not. But I am informed by one,* who has read the sermon, that he established on them a supposed alliance between the church and the state: or rather between the church and the king. By this alliance, the well-spoken Levite was to instil passive obedience to the king into the minds of the people, and to insist on it, as on a law of God. The king, on the other hand, was to be the nursing father of the church, to support her authority, to preserve at least, if not increase, her immunities, and to keep her in the full possession of all the advantages she claimed. The church performed her part, and had a right, by virtue of this alliance, if the king did not perform his, to teach this doctrine no longer, and to resume her indpendency on the state and on him. This was the purport of the sermon at least: and Warburton took his hint, possibly, from it, and turned it to serve his purpose, that is, to lay down the same principles, and to banter mankind, if he could, by not drawing directly and avowedly from them the same conclusions. Doctor Senior's authority is, no doubt, as good in this case, as that of Demarca, or even of Bossuet. The first, a time-serving priest,† interested, and a great flatterer, if ever there was one, and who made no scruple to explain away whatever he had found himself obliged to say in favor of the state. The latter was as wise, if not as cunning, as learned, and a much better man, though not so much in the favor of Mr. Warburton, who gave them characters in his assuming style, without knowing any thing of them, and who has the impertinence to pronounce of the greatest scholar, the greatest divine, and the greatest orator of his age, that he was a good sensible man.‡ He was all I have said of him: but he was an ecclesiastic, and a subject of France.

* Mr. Lewis, who was himself of Trinity College.

† When Demarca was made bishop of Conserans, and could not get his bulls despatched, he explained away all he said to limit the papal power. He sent this book to Innocent X, with a letter, whereby he retracted many things he had said, asked pardon for his errors, and promised for the future to support, with all his force, the prerogatives of the church of Rome. After this he wrote "De Singulari Primatu Petri," to flatter the same Pope.

‡ Vide The last edition of the Alliance between Church and State Demonstrated.

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during their lives: and as bishops ordained one another and their subordinate priests, by the imposition of hands, so they ordained emperors and kings by crowning them and by anointing them with holy oil, which angels were sometimes employed to bring down from heaven. As they made their own office, so they made that of emperors and kings, independent of human institution, and the divine appointment was signified, or rather conveyed, in both cases by their ministry. By this alliance of the heirarchy and the monarchy, religion, that should support good government alone, was employed to support good or bad government alike, as it had been by St. Paul: and the worst of men, and the greatest usurpers and tyrants, were not only passively obeyed, but served and courted by the most eminent saints of the church, when no ecclesiastical interest prevailed to alter their conduct; for then the most fulsome panegyrists became the most virulent libellers, and they, who had preached submission, preached rebellion.

Such infractions of this alliance, or compact, happened sometimes; but in general it held: and a joint usurpation on the liberties of mankind was the effect of it. We have observed already, that Constantine meant to govern the Christian flocks by their pastors. Neither he, nor his successors, perceived, that the imperial and kingly power might be controlled in time by the very expedient by which they hoped to govern more absolutely. Neither he, nor they, apprehended soon enough, that if a degree of ecclesiastical power was necessary to maintain religion, religion might become an expedient to render this power exorbitant. The clergy employed it, to serve the ambition of princes. Why should they not employ it, to serve more effectually their own? All this happened in time, and was brought about by slow but sure degrees. The church claimed at first ecclesiastical jurisdiction, as it was called, alone; cognizance of sins against the laws of God, rather than of crimes against the laws of civil societies, and of matters purely spiritual that related to the consciences of men, and that the civil power could not properly judge. But then among these objects of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, discipline and manners, two very vague appellations, and liable to be much extended, were contained. Sins were multiplied by variety of doctrines; and as they were punished by discipline they were multiplied too by that. Things that could not be deemed spiritual were hauled in as things appertaining to spirituals. Thus ecclesiastical jurisdiction was extended: and the emperors confirmed it, not only by referring such matters to the judgment of synods and spiritual courts, but by their positive edicts.

That they were indifferent enough about doctrines, and more

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solicitous to establish uniformity than orthodoxy, may be well suspected of several. Constantine favored the Nicæan doctrine, in hopes to establish uniformity by it. But when he found that it received different interpretations, and that Athanasius was a principal obstacle to all terms of accommodation, he showed favor to the other. He persecuted Athanasius, he hearkened more than ever to Eusebius of Nicomedia, and when he came to die, he died in that city, a little after he had been baptised by Eusebius. Some of your writers, indeed, would persuade, that he was baptised at Rome by Sylvester, in order to give some color to that impudent forgery of his donation to that pope and the Roman church. But how should they persuade, by fabulous traditions, and such anachronisms as even Jews would blush to own, against the tenor of authentic history, and the monuments of the age; for such we must repute the dates of his edicts to be in this case? I think that his successors, who appear the most attached to reigning orthodox opinions, might act on the same principle. They discovered, and they might have discovered sooner, that these theological disputes are indeterminable in their nature. They imagined, and they might well imagine after what they had seen, though the notion be not absolutely true, that tranquillity could not be preserved in the state without uniformity in religion. To procure this uniformity, therefore, councils provincial and general were called and held on every occasion. They were called and held, the general councils at least were so, by the imperial authority, and not by that of the patriarch of Rome, nor that of the patriarch of Constantinople, in the first ages after the establishment of Christianity. They were composed, no doubt, much like those that have been above described, that is, very scandalously; and they would have decreed to little purpose, if their authority had stood alone. But that of the emperors bore them out. The emperors wanted only a pretence to force an uniform submission to some decision or other; and their authority was just sufficient for that purpose in vulgar prejudice. Thus the allied powers, the hierarchy and the monarchy, have acted ever since. These farces were renewed in every age: in every age their consequences were more or less tragical; and this is the authority to which the Christian world has been resigned in matters of religion.

SECTION XXXII.

The religious society rose very fast, by such means as these, to great pre-eminence over the civil, in the empire, and to an influence over private consciences, that rendered their disputes,

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sometimes about trifling ceremonies, and sometimes about unintelligible speculations, a new source of dissension among mankind, unknown to the pagan world, and even greater than any of those that provoke the most barbarous nations to excesses of cruelty. But there were other means which increased this pre-eminence and influence vastly, and enabled the church to do still greater mischief to the state. One of these means we may reckon to have been the improvement that was made in the hierarchical system. Christianity was a numerous sect before Constantine, or Constantine would have been a Christian no more than Licinius. But the same order and the same polity, which were established afterwards, could not be established either in particular churches, or in the church in general, whilst it was a sect. There was a sort of mixed government, aristocratical and democratical, in the churches, and some of these might correspond and convene together. But in the first case, there was not power sufficient to enforce subordination, nor facility, nor safety enough in the second, whilst these churches were dispersed far and wide under heathen governments. Presbyters or elders ruled the churches. They were all bishops, that is, overseers, alike, and co-equal in rank and power, till factions arising, one presbyter was appointed by the apostles, or chosen by the faithful to govern the rest, and was styled the bishop "eminentiæ gratiâ." Pre-eminence and subordination were established, for much the same reason, even among these superior presbyters or bishops. When metropolitans or archbishops began to be known in the church is not very certain. But I suppose it is certain, that the bishop of a church established in any metropolis presided in every assembly over the other presbyters of the province, even before the reign of Constantine. Thus you see, that the democratical form of church government, which obtained in the days of the apostles, when every one was a teacher that would be so, and when they themselves had no other authority among the faithful than that of first preachers of the gospel and first founders of churches, grew early to be aristocratical. You see, likewise, how early this form began to tend to the monarchical. It tended to it in every succeeding age more and more. As Constantine changed the religion, he made great changes in the constitution of the empire, in the military order, and in the civil administration. He created new and higher offices in the state. So did the clergy in the church. He constituted vicars over the governors of provinces. So primates were raised above metropolitans. The præfecti prætorio had a rank above the vicars. So patriarchs had whenever they got it, over primates. The ecclesiastical power rose

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up from a rough and broad basis to the form of a pyramid; and if the last stone was not laid to crown the fabric, it was attempted to be laid. In plain terms, if there had been an uninterrupted succession of popes, like Gregory the Seventh, during a century, the West might have seen as well as the East a whimsical but real empire founded on superstition. A reputed vicar of God, the pope, might have governed here as absolutely, as a reputed divinity, the dairo, did there. But the fates of the dairo and the pope have been much alike. The former is deposed, confined, and still adored. The latter has been much degraded, if not deposed. His power is confined, if not his person; and though his thunder be heard no longer, he maintains the pageantry of an ecclesiastical Jupiter.

It may appear matter of wonder, that a body of men as ignorant and as profligate as that of the clergy showed itself to be, as soon as it figured in the empire, should be able to assume, under pretence of religion, a power equally exorbitant in the exercise, and mischievous in the consequences. But our wonder will cease, if we consider another of the means that were employed to bring this about. Superstition took the place of religion, and faith of morality. To profess a belief of what no man understood, and to perform all the external duties which the church required, passed, in those days, and I apprehend they do so still among many, for the sum of religion. The Athanasian creed had little intention to make better men, and better citizens. The eight or nine creeds of the Arians had probably as little; and yet an assent to these creeds would have covered a multitude of sins, better than charity: and the vilest of men would have had a fairer chance for salvation, in either of these sects, for the merit of believing, than the most virtuous of men, out of it, for the merit of acting all their lives as such. A religion, which consisted in the profession of an implicit belief, and in the practice of certain external duties, was much more grateful to the generality of men, than a spiritual religion that showed itself outwardly by a strict practice of all the duties of public and private morality. As soon, therefore, as theology and superstition had introduced such a religion in the place of original Christianity, the one passed easily for the other; the inclinations of mankind helped the deception; the vices of the laity were indulged, the vices of the clergy were covered, by it. The solemn manner in which these men officiated imposed on the vulgar of all ranks, who were seduced by the eye, and led by the ear. The very habits of bishops and priests contributed much to the same purposes, as St. Gregory, of Nazianzen observes in one of the discourses to which I referred above. The

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venerable ephod, the cassock of Samuel, the humble walking staff, and those ornaments of the head that denoted virginity.*

But farther. Lest all this should not be sufficient to keep up the false notions of religion, which could alone maintain a profligate clergy in the pre-eminence and authority they had usurped, another expedient was employed. It was of such a nature, that it might have been thought more proper to expose and aggravate, by the contrast it created, than to conceal and atone for the general turpitude of the clergy. But the promoters of it knew what they did. They trusted to the absurdity of mankind, and they followed, with confidence and success, the example set them by the clergy of the most ancient nations. The order of the magi, for instance, was not less ambitious, nor more virtuous probably, than they were: and the same might be presumed of other ecclesiastical orders that had flourished in the East. But in all these orders, there had been particular men, and sects of men, who retired from the world, and dedicated themselves to lives of seeming sanctity and real austerity, by which they maintained a reverence for the grossest superstitions, and for the much larger part of the same ecclesiastical body who remained in the world, and were not exempt from the corruptions of it. Pythagoras had imitated these institutions; and the Jews, who had borrowed much from the Greeks after Alexander's expedition had brought them acquainted, seemed to have copied in the same instance after him. If the Sadducees might be said to resemble the Epicureans, and the Pharisees the Stoicians, sure I am that a nearer resemblance might be found between the Essenes and disciples of Pythagoras, who were behind the curtain, and who lived in community. The Essenes confined themselves to Palestine; but the Therapeutæ were a sort of Hellenist Essenes, who dispersed themselves, as the Christians had done, into Greece and other countries, but principally into Egypt; for which reason one of the names was better known to Josephus, and the other to Philo. Nothing can be more admirable than the sanctity and austerity of this sect, whether appearing in the world or hid in their solitudes. Eusebius, whom an improbability seldom stopped, would have made Christians of them; as several ancient and modern divines have endeavored to do after him, but to no purpose. Christianity was little spread, scarcely known, and scarcely distinguished from Judaism, when Philo gave an account of this sect. But this sect had been long in fulness of fame, before it was imitated by Christians; for it had been so even before Christianity.

* Cernimus venerandam ephodum, et Samuelis diploidem, scipionem humilem, capitis ornamenta virginibus, peculiaria, &c.

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The Decian and other persecutions first, religious melancholy and even a desire of fame afterwards, might carry many Christians to lead an anchoretic life, as Paul and Anthony did in the deserts of Egypt, about whom Athanasius and Jerom have published so many stupid lies. The cenobitic life began much about their time; for it was in the fourth century that Basil instituted his order. But this institution did not come into great vogue, till the want of it was more felt in the very beginning of the sixth century. It was then that Benedict founded his order in Italy, from which so many others sprouted up, like the suckers of a great tree. Monastic institutions multiplied in every age, in the West particularly; for they grew more and more necessary, in every age, to the church, as the ecclesiastical order in general gave more and more scandal, and as the usurpations of the Roman pontiffs, who made great advances towards a spiritual monarchy, increased. Enthusiasm, abetted and conducted by the policy of the church, was a principal motive to such establishments: and indeed no other motive could have filled these numerous societies. The fervor in every one was great at first: and they renewed, in the opinion of mankind, that simplicity, that innocence, that zeal, and that devout austerity, by which primitive Christians were supposed to have distinguished themselves. But this fervor soon grew cool, and luxury, and vices of all kinds, as prevalent in these religious societies, as in any other parts of the Christian church. The expedient however, that served to maintain ecclesiastical pre-eminence and authority, did not fail for this. The secular clergy had been provided for amply, that they might have the means and encouragements necessary to make them answer the ends of their institution, and that no excuse might be left them for neglecting these ends. But when they turned into scandal what was designed for edification, and forfeited, therefore, their right to all they enjoyed by the beneficence of the faithful; when they should have been reformed, or their revenues should have been given to others, instead of this they kept their possessions though they broke their conventions with the public, and the public was at the expense of enriching another clergy. Just so again, and as fast as this other clergy grew corrupt, nothing was taken from them; but new orders of the same kind were founded to screen them and the secular clergy both, or to atone for the iniquity of both: and that eternal bubble, the laity, paid the whole immense and growing charge.

Thus have things continued to the present age: and the religious society, among Christians, has imitated successfully the policy of religious societies that flourished, above three thousand years ago, in the pagan world. You must not be surprised at

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this assertion. It is easy to show, that the vast variety of religions, which prevail in the world, are derived ultimately from a few general principles, common to all men, because they arise from the common fund of human nature: and that in consequence of this, many rites and ceremonies, many institutions and orders, must descend, sometimes with more and sometimes with less affinity, to the latest posterity. They descend, like torrents of water, which are not the same to the sight nor taste, when the length of their course, the soils through which they have passed, and the mixture of other streams, have purified some, and rendered others more foul. But they descend from the same springs: and like those mighty rivers which preserve the freshness of their waters very far into the sea, they perserve much of their original character, as they roll along through the vast ocean of time. Turn your eyes even at this day to the East. You will discover rites, ceremonies, institutions, and orders of men, wherever the devastations of barbarous nations have not destroyed the people as well as the religions of countries, much like to those which prevailed in the same countries in the remotest antiquity. The Bramins have a sort of allegorical polytheism; as I suppose that their predecessors the Brachmans had. They hold the pre-existence and transmigration of souls; they abstain from flesh; they retain the notions of pollution and purification; they wash away sins in the waters of the Ganges; they pretend to abstract themselves from sense, and to contemplate the Supreme Being by intense meditation. The Brachmans were possibly a sect of Gymnosophists: and there are at this time Joghis and Faquirs in the East, who carry their austerity and penance to such surprising excess, that the Carthusian monks, or those of La Trappe, compared with them, may pass for sects of luxurious Sybarites. Should any of these reverend fathers hear it said, that they are descended from ancient, and outdone by modern idolaters, they would be extremely scandalised: and yet nothing is more true. It is as true, as it is to say that they serve the same purposes.

Whilst the eyes of mankind were dazzled by these appearances of sanctity which some few of the religious society, who devoted themselves without knowing that they did so, for the rest, held forth, the rest pursued the designs of their ambition with great art and uninterrupted perseverance. They could not have been achieved with less of either; for even contrary systems were made to co-operate in promoting them, poverty and riches, humility and ostentation, the want and the excess of authority and power. This I mean. The secular clergy not only screened themselves behind the apparent sanctity of the regular, which cast a lustre on the whole church; they not only imposed by the religious merit of others, but they accustomed

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the world by degrees to reverence them for the wealth and dignities they enjoyed, and for the pomp and magnificence with which they affected to appear. As the true spirit of religion decayed, and as that of superstition took its place, this was more easily brought about: and he, who imagined that he paid honor to a successor of the apostles, paid it in reality to the patriarch, the primate, or the metropolitan; dignities which ecclesiastical ambition had assumed, on the model of those which had been created in the state.

The eastern church rose by much the same means, but could never rise to the same power as that of the West. Many reasons of this difference will occur to those who are conversant in the history of the church, and in that of the latter empire. I shall insist on one, which was the principal, and in the consequences of which the western provinces were most concerned in those days, as they were alone concerned afterwards. The reason is this. The opportunities of advancing early and successfully towards a monarchical form of government, were much more favorable in the West than in the East. The patriarchs had a sort of tetrarchical, or ethnarchical authority, for I suppose it is not easy to distinguish them, and besides those ensigns of honor, which primates and metropolitans affected to have as well as they, the patriarchs assumed one which had belonged to the emperors solely, and enjoyed it in common with them; that I mean of lights or fires carried in solemn pomp before them. From the institution of this dignity there were three patriarchs, the patriarchs of Rome, of Antioch, and of Alexandria. He of Rome remained alone in the West; but in the East two others were added, a patriarch of Constantinople, and last of all a patriarch of Jerusalem. It is said that the bishop of Rome, Leo the First, opposed strenuously the erection of this patriarchate. If he did so, although it was evidently an advantage to him that the East should be divided into many patriarchates, whilst he alone was patriarch in the West, and might hope to be so of the West and the East too, we may venture to say that he did not judge of his true interest as nicely as popes have done generally, and as it became him to do in particular, who was thought to join in his conduct the character of the fox to the character, as well as name, of the lion.

Gregory the First, and the Great as he is called, saw the advantage of being sole patriarch in the West, whilst there were four bishops decorated with the same title in the East: and he resolved to improve it. If this rank had been given on a religious account, it ought to have been given surely, in the first place, to the bishop of Jerusalem; since Christianity began there, and was propagated originally from thence: though other churches, those

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of Antioch, of Alexandria, and of Rome particularly, might seem to be coeval with it. But these were great cities and had great dependencies, whilst Jerusalem lay in ashes; from which miserable state she never arose to her former grandeur, and whilst Byzantium was neither an imperial nor a Christian city. The pre-eminence of bishops was determined, in some measure, by the pre-eminence of cities, so that when patriarchs were made, though these were, as bishops had been, equal in authority, and though their authority was confined to their patriarchates, and never, I believe, very well ascertained even in them; yet they might contend for a priority of rank among themselves, and he who held the first rank among them, would hold it of course in the whole church. That the pope of Rome, which was the sole imperial city during the first three hundred years of the Christian era, should claim this priority, and that other patriarchs should acquiesce in it, cannot be thought extraordinary, if it should be thought true. They might allow him this primacy, for ought I know. But if they did, they gave him nothing more than a feather to adorn his mitre. Not only other patriarchs were styled by the same pompous titles that were given to him, but bishops too. Popes were contradicted, reproved, censured, even by these; and nothing can be more evident than this, that they reputed the Roman bishop to be, with regard to them, the first among equals "primus inter pares" only; that is, he was bishop of the first see, "primæ sedis," and had on that account a precedency, or nominal primacy. This indeed was little of itself, but it might lead to more. A seeming primacy might give one that was real: and as titles are often derived from powers, power might be derived in time from this empty title.

Thus the bishops of Rome, whilst they were only bishops, thought; and were, therefore, fond of a title, empty as it was, that could not be contested with them, nor was contested, till Constantinople was built, and the seat of the empire translated thither. Then it became disputable indeed which was the first see: and if the title of ecumenical patriarchs, which began to steal into use, as most ecclesiastical usurpations have done, and as, I believe, this did, though Leo the first is said to have refused it, could have been obtained by him of Constantinople, all the advantages might have been lost to him of Rome, which he expected to reap with this title from his growing primacy. This Gregory the First saw, and he neglected nothing to prevent it. Well may it be said that he neglected, and that he stuck at nothing to prevent it, when we consider the conduct he held towards Phocas. Mauritius was a good prince. Gregory, the most fawning, the most canting, and the most ambitious of priests, had extolled his charity and his piety too even when he besought

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the emperor to revoke an edict he had made, and which the good bishop had executed, however, in the mean time. John, the patriarch of Constantinople, passed for a pious prelate, and was of such remarkable austerity, that he acquired the name of the faster. Phocas was the most vicious and cruel of men. But John assumed the title of ecumenical patriarch: and Mauritius favored his pretensions. These were irremissible crimes in both; whilst the merit of favoring the ambitious humility of Gregory, who affected to take no higher title than that of servant of the servants of God, was sufficient to make a Trajan of Phocas. This inhuman usurper, not content to put the empress, her three daughters, and almost all the relations and friends of Mauritius, to death, caused the five sons of his master to be murdered* in his presence; and under the eyes of their father: who was afterwards stretched out on the bodies of these innocents, and made a sacrifice, on that bleeding altar, to the same unrelenting cruelty. This scene of horror communicated none to Gregory. The revolution, however brought about, gave him, his see at least, the victory over his rival; and he thanked God, most impiously, for it. The three letters which he wrote on this occasion to Phocas and Leontia, in all the prostitution of flattery, the solemn reception that he gave their images, which he placed in the oratory of the martyr Cæsarius, and the prayers which the senate and clergy offered up for the prosperity of these monsters, in a public thanksgiving, by his direction, are monuments of the infamous methods by which it was thought lawful to promote the designs of ecclesiastical ambition. Gregory's design succeeded; for Phocas gave, though not to him yet to his successors, the title he would not suffer the fasting prelate to assume. But Gregory's memory must be abhorred by every honest mind: and the impudence of your church, forgive the expression, in making this man a saint, nor the folly of many in ours who speak of him as such, cannot be atoned for by the modesty that has been shown in preferring scarce any other pope to the same rank since that time.

The Roman pontiffs had more opportunities, and therefore greater encouragement than any others, to promote these designs both at home and abroad. There were no patriarchs in the West to share with them the lustre of this dignity. In a few generations after Constantine, the empire of the West, which he had weakened, fell into ruins: and as there was no emperor in Italy after the deposition of Augustulus by Odoacer, so the remains of the imperial dignity in that country were not sufficient to overshadow theirs; especially after they founded their primacy no

* Maimb. Hist. du Pont. de St. Greg.

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longer on the authority of an imperial rescript, but on a supposed divine institution. On the contrary, theirs increased as that of the emperors died away. Italy lay exposed to the invasions of barbarous nations. So did Gaul, and Britain, and the other provinces. Of all these misfortunes, the Roman pontiffs made their profit. The pre-eminence they had acquired, and much more their industry, their perseverance, and their skill, made them in some sort, and on several occasions, the protectors of Italy, and of Rome especially. About the middle of the fifth century, Attila took Aquilea, Pavia, and Milan, ravaged all the country we call Lombardy, and threatened even Rome. The bishop of this city went at the head of an embassy to him: and though the fabulous circumstances, that have been invented to give a miraculous appearance to the success of the legation, deserve our contempt, yet the legation had success in appearance, since Attila, for some reason or other, left Italy; and Rome was delivered from her fears. In the same pontificate, Genseric, the Vandal, surprised and took Rome at the solicitation of Eudoxia, who desired to revenge the death of one husband and to get rid of another. The pope, Leo, had not the same success on this occasion as on the former.* The Arian was not so complaisant as the pagan. Rome was pillaged fourteen days together. But some of the churches were saved, the town was not burned, nor the people put to the sword: and all that happened less than had been apprehended was imputed to the intercession of Leo.

The history of this fifth century, and of the three or four that follow, is extremely confused and dark: and yet we are able to discern a most surprising system of political conduct, founded on the same principles, and carried on through the whole time, till that spiritual tyranny, which had done so much mischief under an aristocratical form before, and has made such havoc in the world since under the monarchical form, was fully established. I touch the subject lightly, but I must say something more upon it.

SECTION XXXIII.

The bishops of Rome had, besides the advantages they procured to themselves, and those that time and accidents put into their hands, one original advantage which has been hinted at already, of the greatest importance to them at Rome, and every where else, from an habitual respect, that the subjects of the empire retained, and the conquerors of the western provinces contracted, for the ancient capital of the empire. It was natural

* Maimb. Hist. du Pont. de St. Leon.

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for the Romans, when Rome became Christian, to desire, that their bishop should represent the sovereign pontiff, who had resided among them whilst they were heathens. Laical vanity might, and ecclesiastical ambition could not fail to desire this. The consent of both made all the papal usurpations easy: and the people in general liked better a voluntary subjection, for such it was at first, to their bishops, than a forced subjection to prefects or any other imperial officers. The popes took the pomp and state of the pontifex maximus, before they assumed the title: and the contests about their elections, bloody contests in the streets and in the churches too, showed what an object of ambition the bishopric of Rome was, even before the destruction of the western empire. These pontiffs, in truth, derived their sovereignty more properly from Numa than from Christ: and pagan prejudices had some effect, even when the world was become Christian, in creating a respect for them. The title of ecumenical bishop extended, and realised, in some instances, their claims.—But the title of bishops of the eternal city helped the imposition. This imposition of the popes did not prevail much among the Arians; because of their opposition to Arianism, and therefore, as they persecuted this sect, wherever they had power to do it, they were obsequious enough to Arian princes, under whom they had not this power: an example whereof might be taken from the embassy of one of these popes, whose name I do not remember, and whom Theodoric sent to Justin to persuade that emperor to show more indulgence to the Arians in his dominions, lest the Gothic king should take reprisals on the orthodox in the West. But wherever orthodoxy prevailed, these titles procured a great regard to the see of Rome, and an influence which the popes improved directly and indirectly, to confirm their authority where it was acknowledged, and to propagate it, under the notion of conversions to Christianity, where it was not acknowledged.

This calls to my mind the mission, that Gregory, the same I have spoken of already, sent into Britain. This example will show what that Christianity was which the popes propagated; and how the grossest frauds, that iniquity ever invented, or impudence imposed, were established under that venerable name. Brunehault, queen of France, must pass for one of the worst women that ever lived, if the general consent of historians can establish a character. Gregory held an intimate correspondence with this woman; and this intimacy with her, and with Phocas, is such a brand on his memory, that we might be surprised to find his name in the calendar of your saints, if we did not find that of another Gregory, Gregory the Seventh, there. Brunehault was extremely liberal to the ecclesiastical order. She built churches, founded convents, and had a great devotion to relics.

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So much liberality, and so much superstition, might have made a saint even of her too, notwithstanding her crimes; and she might have stood over your altars in company with her panegyrist. This pious queen contributed not only to maintain the authority of the bishop of Rome in France, where it was respected already, but to propagate it where it was not yet known; for it is plain, that the conversion of the Saxons to papal Christianity was concerted with her. The more immediate instrument of this conversion indeed was Berthe daughter of Charibert king of France, and wife of Ethelbert king of the South Saxons. She protected, she introduced the missionaries: and the king and his subjects were converted to the Roman religion.

I do not speak improperly when I say the Roman religion: for although Gregory says, in a letter to Brunehault, only this, that "he heard the church of England had a mind to become Christian;"* yet is it certain, that the Saxons had the knowledge of Christianity, as it was taught in the first ages, before Austin and his monks came to preach it as it had been modelled, and, to speak plainly, corrupted in the church of Rome and the other Christian churches. The Britons had been converted long before to the Christian religion; and the Saxons had a knowledge of it from them. On this supposition we may account, and on any other, it is impossible to account for the obstinate adherence of the Saxons, after their supposed conversion by Austin, to the Asiatic and most ancient rule of celebrating Easter, which had been changed in the church of Rome, and which Austin opposed. The Britons had been driven into a remote corner of the world; and the Saxons were a greater barrier than the sea itself between them and the continent. They retained, therefore, their religion as they had received it, and knew nothing of the additions that had been made to it since the time of their conversion, nor particularly any thing of the Roman bishop's pretensions to a supremacy. As they knew, so they might, and so I believe they did, teach the Saxons; and it was neither hard for one to teach, nor for the other to learn, Christianity, in a simplicity that came nearer to that wherein Christ had taught it to the poor and the ignorant. But this was to be unlearned; and the sole object of Austin's mission was to teach both Britons and Saxons a new-fangled Christianity, and to inspire them with a foolish respect for superstitious usages, and with an abject submission to the see of Rome. That these were the points he labored, appears from all we know of the conduct he held, from his disputes with the Britons, from the instructions he

* Indicamus ad nos pervenisse ecclesiam Anglicanam velle fieri Christianam.—Lib. v, ep. 59.

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asked, and from those which the pope gave him. The height to which he carried his legatine power, and the insolence with which he treated the British bishops, demonstrate the spirit in which he came, and the purpose he came for. The declaration that these bishops sent him, or the abbot of Bangor by their direction, was modest but firm. They declared themselves subject to the church of God, and to the pope of Rome. But how? As they were to every godly Christian, &c. Other obedience than this, they say to Austin, that they do not know to be due to him whom he called pope; and that they were under the government of the bishop of Caerleon upon Uske, &c.

The Britons stood out against the usurpations of the popes many centuries. But the Saxons soon crouched under them. The Saxons were a fierce and a free, but they were an ignorant people: and therefore false notions of Christian institution were easily imposed upon them. From notions thus imposed, the clergy derived pretensions to such powers, such immunities, and such pre-eminence of rank and dignity, as raised the bishops to an equality with prices and kings in some respects, and to a superiority over them in as many as were, or could be made to seem relative to religion; for in these "omnibus dignitatibus præsunt" was a maxim which they had the front to avow, and which the civil society were stupid enough to admit. What they pretended to belong to them, they assumed: and what they assumed they justified by canons, that is, by laws of their own making. The ecclesiastical Roman yoke was so well fixed on the neck of the Saxons, that it grew more and more confirmed, till the Normans came in, and then it did not become lighter; for they brought the same prejudices along with them:* so that our island was a province, and a farm, to the court of Rome near five hundred years longer. How easy soever it would be to descend into all these particulars, I should find it tedious: and you know that I never engaged to write treatises, nor any thing more than essays; if my part in our occasional conversations, extended on paper, can deserve even that name. But since I mentioned the few false notions, concerning Christian institution, that imposed on the Saxons, and since I think the usurpations of the religious society have been founded every where else on the same, I will endeavor to expose them to you in a few words, to show you how the first deception arose in the whole Christian commonwealth, and how the monarchical tyranny of the bishop of Rome was grafted on it.

* Vide Bacon's Treatise from Selden's Notes.

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SECTION XXXIV.

I am not a disciple of Hobbes, but I embrace truth wherever I find it, or whoever shows it to me: and he shows it to me, I think, when he maintains, that the present church of Christ, by which we mean in this place the whole body of Christians, is not the kingdom of Christ. This opinion, however, that it is so, grew early into belief, and will be supported as long as that order of men can support it, who have assumed, under pretence of being appointed to govern and administer in it, an establishment distinct from the civil, and a most unreasonable and unequal share of wealth and power in almost every Christian state. No opinion, however, can be more evidently false. The express declaration which Christ made when he said, "my kingdom is not of this world," the conduct he held, the doctrines he taught, and the commission he gave to his apostles, prove it to be so. If it had been the divine intention to establish, at that time, the kingdom of Christ, he would have appeared, no doubt, more conformably to the expectations of the Jews in majesty and power. But they mistook the sense of their prophecies, it seems; their expectations were vain, and the purposes of infinite wisdom opened themselves in a very different manner.

The Messiah showed himself to the world in the lowest form of life, and avoided all appearances of affecting any higher rank, even that of the Messiah, which was distinguished from that of king; though the Jews, misled by their prophecies, could not conceive the two characters to be distinguishable. He came not to reign, but to redeem; not to triumph but to suffer; not to erect a kingdom, but to prepare men for that which was to be erected at his second coming. It may seem strange, that he could conceal himself, notwithstanding the signs and wonders that illustrated his birth, the proclamation of him from above at the time of his baptism, and all the miracles which he wrought, chiefly indeed out of Jerusalem, during the time of his ministry. But it is not strange, that he used all the means of keeping up this concealment of himself to the last, and in a great degree even from his disciples, on the hypothesis here mentioned. If he had declared himself publicly and plainly to be the Messiah, either the Jews would have taken him by force to make him king, as St. John tells us, that they who had seen his miracles were ready to do;* or they would have looked on him, from the first, as an impostor, since he pretended to be the Messiah,

* Reasonab. of Christian.

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and yet assumed no dominion, nor claimed any kingdom. In one case, the design of his coming would have been entirely perverted. In the other, the Jews might have laid immediate hold on him, and have taken away his life. In neither, could he have had the means, nor the time necessary to perform all the purposes of his mission, and to fulfil all the prophecies according to his own applications of them.

To prevent these effects of the mistaken zeal of the Jews, and to keep himself in the state of an innocent man towards the Roman government, without being at the expense of more miracles for these purposes, according to Mr. Locke, his conduct was reserved and cautious, his language mystical and parabolical. But the repeated declarations he made, during the course of his mission, that his kingdom was not of this world, were sufficient to keep him from being obnoxious to the Romans: and though he owned himself to Pilate the king of a world to come, we see that Pilate found no fault in him, and that he declared him an innocent man, when he delivered him up to the Jews to be crucified. For what concern could Pilate or his master imagine they had in a world that was to come, in a future kingdom, in a kingdom of God, in a kingdom of heaven? In this manner, one part of the Saviour's intentions was answered. His innocence was averred. But there was another part. He was not only to be innocent, he was to die innocent: and of this he made the Jews the instruments by a sequel of the most artful behaviour, which Mr. Locke developes with a sagacity that might give envy to the deepest divine, that ever undertook to discover the economy of infinite wisdom.

He contrived to appear guilty to the Jews, by the same declaration by which he appeared innocent to the Romans. He appeared a very extraordinary person to both: and well he might; but he spoke plainly to one as far as they were concerned, and darkly and ambiguously to the other. He pretended to no kingdom: Cæsar had no rival in him. But for this very reason, he became criminal to the Jews. The miracles he performed, the obscure expressions he let drop, induced some of the people to take him for the prophet that was to come, for the Messiah. But the scribes, the Pharisees, and the bulk of the people, who hearkened, as he had bid them hearken, to those who sat in the seat of Moses, could not easily take him for the Messiah, consistently with their prejudices; since he assumed no kingdom, nor pretended to any. Nay, more, they could not have taken him easily for the Messiah, if they had been able to distinguish between the Messiah and the king; since he disguised one of these characters, as he disowned the other. This extraordinary person, therefore, was, according to their logic, an impostor.

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They were a rejected people, for not believing him to be the Messiah, on the faith of his miracles: and he kept them in this error. At least he did nothing to draw them out of it, that they might bring him to the cross, when his time should be come, and complete the redemption of mankind, without knowing what they did, but at their own expense.

He passed for a Galilean, though he was born at Bethlehem, by which one proof of his being the Messiah was suppressed. Even his precursor, he who had baptised him, he who had been a witness when he baptised him of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him, and had heard a voice from heaven declare "this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," which voice, therefore, must have been the voice of God, the Father, even he did not know certainly that the Son of God was the Messiah. When John was in prison, he sent to ask Jesus, so little did he know him to be the Messiah, "art thou he that should come, or do we expect another?" The answer Jesus made was an appeal to his miracles, which proved him to be a very extraordinary person indeed, but which did not prove him in those days, and *ad homines*, to be the Messiah; for a belief of the powers of magic was not as ridiculous then as it is now, and the Pharisees had prepared the people to believe these very miracles wrought by Beelzebub. The answers he gave on other occasions were not less equivocal, nor the language he held about himself at any time more explicit, than that wherein he declares himself the light of the world as long as he is in world. He was so apprehensive of being taken for the Messiah, lest he should be taken for a king too, that he scarce owned himself even to his disciples, and that he commanded the devils who proclaimed him to be so, when he cast them out, to say nothing of it. If he declared himself more openly, just before his death, to be the Messiah, he claimed to the last no actual kingdom, no kingdom of this world, neither before his death nor after it, till he should come again in the glory of his Father, with his angels, to judge the world, and to render to every man according to his works.

The resurrection, the ascension of Christ, and the coming of the Paraclete or Comforter, who was to show the disciples all things, and bring to their remembrance all things which he had said, made them understand more clearly and believe more firmly that he was the Messiah and the king. The prophets had spoken of him under both these characters confusedly: and the Jews had been led, by these prophecies, and by their partial interpretations of them, to imagine not only, that the Messiah and the king were to be one and the same person, in which they did not deceive themselves, but that all the glorious things, which had been foretold of him, were to happen at once, and as soon

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he should appear, in which they flattered and deceived themselves very fatally. The disciples saw now, what they had not seen fully and clearly before. They saw that the two characters, and the offices belonging to each, were to be distinguished. They saw that their master had already appeared in one, and had performed and suffered all that belonged to it. They believed, therefore, that he would soon appear in the other, as he gave them reason to expect he would according to their apprehensions; that his kingdom, for the coming of which he had taught them to pray, would then come; and that when he was seated in the throne of his glory, his immediate disciples should also sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. He redeemed mankind at his first coming, and taught and exhorted them to prepare for his second, when they, who have believed in him, are to enjoy a glorious immortality. Then, and not till then, his kingdom will begin, properly and truly called so. The intermediate time is a time of regeneration and preparation. Divines talk of a kingdom of grace, but the expression is figurative, and apt to convey a false idea. The kingdom of glory alone is Christ's kingdom. He instituted none that was to precede it. He exercised no dominion, no coercive power, nor delegated any to be exercised by others.

If any such had been delegated by him, it would have been so, doubtless, to his immediate disciples the apostles, and to the seventy.* But when we examine their commission, we find nothing of this kind in it. They were commissioned to teach or to preach to all nations, or, perhaps, to the lost sheep of Israel dispersed into all nations, that Jesus was the Messiah. They were authorised to say, after their master, that his kingdom would come, that it was at hand, that they who received them, and the gospel they taught, would be received into it, and that the state of those cities who received them not, would be in that day, the day when the kingdom of Christ should come, less tolerable than that of Sodom. They were to baptise such as believed: and this baptism or washing was made a sign of regeneration, and admission into the church of Christ here, in order to admission into his kingdom hereafter. Christ gave his apostles another power, which seems to be consequential to that of baptising, and therefore connected with it, the power of remitting or retaining sins. Though I do not pretend to dogmatise about the nature and extent of this power, yet I may pretend to say what it is not, and to what it does not extend. It is not a power to

* N. B. I say the seventy both here and elsewhere, in conformity to the general run of orthodox opinion, though I know that we have no authority, but that of St. Luke, for assuming this distinct number of disciples.

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forgive or not to forgive, to cancel or not to cancel, sins, absolutely and definitively. Such a power belongs to the great searcher of hearts alone. The apostles might admit those, who professed their belief in Christ by baptism, into the church, and retain them in it as long as they held the same faith and brought forth fruits meet for repentance. They not only might, but it was their duty to do so, and St. John censures very severely Diotrephes, in his third epistle, for a contrary practice. If he who had offended on any occasion appeared to be penitent, he might be absolved, that is, his sins were remitted, and he was retained in the Christian church. If he was impenitent, he could not be absolved; his sins were retained, and he was to the brethren as an heathen man and a publican. In these cases, as in that of baptism, the apostles and their successors were merely ministers, who performed a ceremony, or pronounced a judgment. They could not refuse baptism to believers: and it was not they, but the church, the congregation of the faithful properly, who retained an offender in their body by remitting his sins, or drove them out by retaining them; that is, by refusing to remit them: for which assertion we have the authority of Christ, in the eighteenth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, and that of St. Paul's example in his proceeding with regard to the fornicator in the church of Corinth.

This power, which Christ gave to his disciples and to his church, was so far from being a coercive power, such a power as kings delegate, and those who govern under them exercise, such a power, in short, as may serve to show that he meant to establish any kingdom in this world, that it shows the very contrary. "Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained." Again "whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." These expressions, taken together, point at the other world, the world to come; and the full effect of the promises and threatenings, they contain is to be expected there, not here. In this intermediate state of preparation and probation, all that they, who are appointed ministers of the gospel, as such can do, by virtue of the power delegated by the first passage, is to advise, exhort, admonish, and to separate themselves, and to persuade the faithful to separate, from the impenitent and refractory. This is all the power which the first of these passages gives. The second gives no farther power, but it contains a promise which must not be understood according to the natural import of the words, nor without very great mitigations of the sense; lest it should be understood to imply such an absurdity as it would be impious to impute to the word of God, how desirous soever

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divines may be to have it so understood. It would imply that Christ, when he comes at the last day in the glory of his Father, and to establish his kingdom, will not come to judge the world, or the Christian part of it at least, but merely to execute judgments already given, the judgments of the church. In short, Christ gave no coercive power to his apostles: and they who succeeded them exercised none, till they obtained it, or stole it, from the kings whose kingdoms were of this world. Then, indeed, excommunications grew coercive, and severely so: and powers that were tyrannical in their execution, and civil in their origin, began to pass for ecclesiastical and lawful powers, in the hands of men who had no right by their institution to any that are coercive or penal. But if that were true, which is evidently false, that Christ had given such powers to his apostles, as their successors claim and exercise too, wherever they are suffered to do so, yet there would be no reason to allow this claim now, nor was there any to allow it even in the primitive ages of Christianity. Christ breathed on his apostles, bid them receive the Holy Ghost, and we are bound to believe that he inspired the same spirit into them by this act, which descended afterwards more manifestly upon them and the disciples under the figure of fiery tongues. The gifts of the spirit were then common, and evidenced themselves by sanctity of life, and by many other unequivocal signs. But these signs, sanctity of life and miraculous operations, soon failed. Priests after that might blow on other priests, lay their hands on them, and bid them receive the Holy Ghost. But it was silly and impious both to persuade the civil society of Christians, that such priests, as these were generally, could either give or be worthy to receive the Holy Ghost. This they did however, and it was necessary to carry on this illusion, that they might carry on the other. As soon as they had persuaded that the church of Christ was the kingdom of Christ, and that this order of men was appointed to govern in it, there was a necessity of persuading likewise, that the same spirit, the same gifts and graces, which Christ had bestowed on the apostles for the establishment of his church, were conveyed down for the government of it by their order.

If we had less experience of the powerful effects of ambition, avarice, and superstition, we might be surprised that some men have been hardy enough to assert, and others weak enough to believe, against the express declarations of Christ himself, that his kingdom is of this world, and that it began immediately after his first coming; though he fixed the commencement of it, at his second coming; the time of which he left uncertain. There are many dark passages in the gospels, and when there are no others relative to any particular subject, the presumption of theology

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has a full scope. But when there are passages, the sense of which is determined and plain, these are to guide us to the sense of those that are ambiguous and obscure. To take a contrary method, to explain and pretend to fix the sense of what is clear by what is dark, may be called subtility and deep penetration; but sure I am it deserves to be called absurd and impudent imposition.—This now is the very thing that has been done in the case before us. Divines of all ages, all countries and sects have done it. They do it still: and Beza and Bellarmine, who agreed in nothing else, agreed in this.

I mention Beza particularly, because he inferred, as I learn from Hobbes, that the commencement of the kingdom of God should be placed at the resurrection of Christ, from a passage in the gospel of Mark. In that, the words Jesus is recorded to have spoken are these: "Verily I say unto you, that there be some of them who stand here, which shall not taste of death till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." These words, like those which he spoke of St. John to St. Peter, "if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" are very dark indeed. They plainly relate to his second coming, which is characterised by coming with power. But then it will follow, that the persons spoken of are still alive; which might have passed among the good people of Ephesus, who believed, in St. Austin's time, that St. John was still alive, and only slept in his grave: and would not pass, I presume, in these days. Shall we accept the conjecture of Hobbes? He thinks, that the words related to the transfiguration, of which Peter and James and John, some, not all, who stood by Jesus when he spoke them, were witnesses. He thinks, that these disciples, having seen Christ in glory and majesty, as he is to appear at his second coming, the promise was accomplished by way of vision. But this is conjecture only, and though ingenious, yet forced and certainly not serious; for if these disciples did see him, they saw him in a vision, and they neither saw him come, nor the kingdom of God come, in any propriety of speech. There might be a more probable account given, perhaps, why these words were spoken according to the natural and obvious sense of them. But I use none of the theological liberties of guess with holy writ, and I content myself to observe on this occasion the absurdity of that of Beza. Hobbes takes notice justly, that if the kingdom of God was to come, and did come at the resurrection, the expression was not exact, since all the disciples, not some only, lived till Christ was risen from the dead. But the absurdity of this interpretation is greater still.—The ascension followed soon the resurrection. Between these two events, Christ assumed no more dominion than he had done before, nor showed any more signs of claiming or exercising

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kingly power. He scarce showed himself to the few, who were said to have seen him, in such a manner as they could know by it, certainly, that it was he whom they had seen. I say the few, because St. Paul, who had not properly ever seen Jesus, deserves no credit when he affirms, against the whole tenor of the gospels, that he and above five hundred brethren at once had seen him after his resurrection. Both these events, the resurrection and ascension, passed in a very private manner. There were no eye-witnesses, properly called so, of his resurrection. There were few, of his ascension. But in whatever manner we can suppose them to have passed, if we suppose him to have risen from the dead, and to have ascended into heaven, with the same public pomp and majesty with which he is to be attended when he shall come to judge the world, and to establish the kingdom he foretold, yet we cannot assert that this kingdom came, or began at that time. As God, he reigns eternally; but the kingdom here spoken of was to have a beginning, and to say that it began when Christ, who had not then established it, returned to reign with his father in the unity of the godhead; or that it came, though we continue still to pray that it may come, when Christ left the earth, or that he vested the apostles, or those who call themselves their successors, with a sovereignty in this imaginary kingdom, which he never assumed himself, is one of those paradoxes, which men, who find a color for any in the dark sayings of the Scriptures, presume to advance.

Many other paradoxes have been built on this, the common foundation of all ecclesiastical power: and it has happened in the course of these usurpations, as it has happened often in the course of others. Whilst the whole body of the clergy pursued, one general maxim, an interest of ambition common to the whole body, particular members invented other paradoxes, which seemed to arise out of the first, and which became maxims just as true as the first. Thus, that I may say in few words what I mean to say, and not to descend into a long detail of particulars, ecclesiastical as well as civil democracies became aristocracies: aristocracies became monarchies, and several monarchies were united into one empire, under those great conquerors, the bishops of Rome. The Christian church bore some resemblance, after the establishment of it, to the state of ancient Greece. Both were composed of several little governments. They were all Greeks in one, and all Christians in the other; but the quarrels of parties, in each of these, as well as the quarrels of one government with another, destroyed the public peace, and continued to do so notwithstanding all the judgments of the Areopagus and all the decrees of councils. The feuds that arose in particular churches gave occasion or pretence to the institu-

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tion of bishops; and those that arose between church and church, to the institution of metropolitans, primates, and patriarchs, one of whom pretended at last to be the vicar of Christ in his imaginary kingdom. In short, the clergy, like other usurpers, in order to maintain the advantages they had gained over the laity, or to carry their arms abroad in search of more, have found it necessary to submit to usurpations within their own body, and to groan under the very yoke they imposed.

Every innovation has been supported by some new paradox; and divine right has been claimed by all, on that fundamental paradox, in which they all agree. Marchmont will tell you that presbytery is *jure divino*. I shall tell you that episcopacy is so; and though you are not a very good papist, you will tell us that popery is so. Let us be candid, and confess that none of them are so. To set an example of candor, I will own, that as monstrous as the papal pretensions are against which we Protestants exclaim so loudly, they may be supported, by wresting and torturing the Scriptures, just as well as the principles in which we agree, that the Christian church is actually the kingdom of Christ, and that a religious society was instituted to govern in it by his authority. These principles are laid in direct opposition to the plainest and most positive declarations which the Saviour made. But when they are once admitted, Bellarmine and the other writers for the church and court of Rome are able to defend their monstrous pretensions so plausibly to well disposed minds, that instead of contradicting the Scriptures, they seem to build upon them, not only on passages in the epistles of St. Paul, who boasted that he was the architect of the spiritual house, and that he laid the foundations of it, but on the words of Christ as they stand in some passages of the gospels, and to make their work the more sure, as they imagine absurdly enough, on passages of the Old Testament as well as of the New. Thus they prove the popes, as successors of St. Peter, to be vicars of Christ, to be infallible in all their judgments concerning faith and manners, and to have the supreme spiritual and even temporal power in every Christian country. Such are the real pretensions of your church over all civil power, over all emperors, kings and princes. Such saints as your angelical doctor, such writers as Bellarmine and Baronius have affirmed them. Councils have held the same language; and all they who would take the temporal sword out of the hands of St. Peter, have been branded with heresy, the heresy of the politics, "hæresis politicorum." True it is, that some of your doctors, and even some councils have seen the folly, and blushed at the impudence of those who have carried these pretensions in favor of the papal authority so high. Many have written against them, even in Italy; but both sides have

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concurred in giving to the church, understanding by the church the ecclesiastical order alone, a full and independent power over the state in spirituals; by which they saw that they might preserve indirectly a tyranny they could not obtain directly.

SECTION XXXV.

From the time of Constantine to that of Charles the Great, the wealth and power of the church had grown from age to age, by such means as have been already mentioned: and the authority of that of Rome particularly began to overtop all others, by a stupid bigotry that increased as ignorance increased, and by the artifices which her bishops employed. But Charles the Great raised these bishops to that exorbitant power and grandeur which enabled them to vex and oppress some of his own successors, and to tyrannise the whole western world: till in the reign of another Charles, several nations shook this yoke off their necks, and made it sit lighter on the necks of those who did not shake it off. When the Lombards had settled themselves in Italy, the popes began to play a game, which they could not play with the same advantage, for many reasons, in the reigns of the Gothic kings. They fomented continual quarrels between the exarchs who governed for the Constantinopolitan emperors, and the Lombards, in order to make their profit of them against both: and when they had drawn themselves into distress and danger, their refuge for protection was to France. They apprehended less the emperors, whose government was weak and oppressive, despised therefore and hated, and who were at a greater distance from Italy, and careless enough about it. They excommunicated the exarchs, and in the dispute about image-breaking, the emperor himself. Gregory the Second and the Third took advantage of this pretended heresy, and in their zeal for images, which suited the humor of the times and the prejudices of the people, the first of these popes took upon him to forbid not only in his own diocese, but every where else, that the orders of Leo the Isaurian should be obeyed: and the second excommunicated him, and absolved his subjects from their allegiance to him. Usurpation was soon added to revolt, and the people of Rome were made to swear allegiance to the popes.— Charles Martel had abetted these ambitious and turbulent prelates against the emperor: and, when they were in danger from the Lombards, he saved them by the influence he had on Luitprand. But Charles Martel dead, Ravenna taken, and the exarchate conquered, they lay at the mercy of this people, who knew their double dealing, and had sufficient reason to complain of

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the conduct they had in the revolt of Thrasimond Duke of Spoletto, and on other occasions. This might have defeated all their designs; and the power they had acquired might have been crushed under that of the Lombards, if they had not improved very dexterously a singular conjecture to ruin the Lombards in their turn, and to finish on these ruins that stately edifice of spiritual and temporal grandeur which they had advanced very far on those of their ancient masters the emperors.

When Pepin the Short resolved to take the title, as he had the power, of king of the Franks, he thought it necessary, not only to remove all scruples from the minds of his people, who might esteem themselves bound by their oaths to Childeric and the Merovingian race, but to justify his new title to other Christian nations. He might have done the first, perhaps, by some solemn farce, which his own clergy would have been ready enough to act. But to do both more effectually he chose to have the farce acted at Rome. He sent his messengers to question the oracle: and Zachary gave the best reason that ever pope, or oracle, gave for the sentence he pronounced. He pronounced, that the French were no longer bound by their oaths to Childeric, since this prince had not kept his engagement to them. The reason followed the sentence; for "such is the nature of conditional contracts," said Zachary, "that if one party fails, the other is absolved from his promise."* This answer had a full effect. Pepin was chosen king, and Childeric deposed unanimously in the national assembly that was held at Soissons.

If his holiness was not paid beforehand, as ancient oracles were most commonly, Zachary foresaw, that the time of payment would soon come, and he took the best method to secure it. He was at peace with the Lombards when he solved this famous case of conscience in favor of Pepin; but as soon as they had conquered Ravenna and the Pentapolis, for Italy had a Pentapolis too, Astolphus their king determined, that the popes, who had been subject to the emperors, should be subject to him. The good men, who had revolted from their ancient master, did not care to submit to a new power, the seat of which was in Italy, and which would be always at hand to keep them in awe, to control and to punish them. Stephen the Third was not ashamed to apply for help to Constantine, the son of that very Leo, who had been treated so insolently by the two Gregories. But the emperor having as little concern for the church and people of Rome as they deserved from him, Stephen did at last, what Zachary, more able than he, would have done at first; he had recourse to Pepin. He was received in France with more

* Mezeray.

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than respect, with a ridiculous, and yet in those circumstances a wise appearance of veneration; if it be true, that Pepin and his sons threw themselves at the feet of the priest to receive his blessing. He conjured them, in ecclesiastical cant, to defend the church of Rome, and the sepulchres of the apostles, that is, the dominion and sovereignty which the popes had usurped against the Lombards. The Lombards were Christians, and meant no hurt to the religion they professed. But the cause of the clergy and the cause of religion were made, by the logic of those times, as well as of ours, the same, when they were quite distinct, and even when they were opposite. Pepin was glad to seize an opportunity of satisfying, at once, his own ambition and that of the Roman bishops. Stephen anointed him, his wife and his children; declared them, after this holy unction, princes by the grace of God; thundered out excommunication against all persons, subjects or strangers, who should oppose them in any time to come, and confined Childeric on the same day to a monastery, as he confined the children of Carloman, Pepin's brother. Pepin made two expeditions into Italy, reduced the Lombards, usurped on them the exarchate they had usurped on the Greeks, and gave it to St. Peter: such was the style.

Charles made several of these expeditions, and in them an absolute conquest of the Lombards. He confirmed what his father had done, and did still more for the church. He gave the exarchate and the five cities to the Roman see most certainly; but it is as certain, that he did not make an absolute alienation of them, without any reserve of sovereignty over the pope and them. His grant of Mantua, of Parma, of the two Sicilies, and of other dominions, is a mere supposition, and as ill founded as the pretended donation of Constantine to Sylvester and the bishops of Rome. If this has succeeded a little more to their advantage than the other, one reason of this success may be found, I think, in the passages of the time we speak of here. Whatever pope forged the donation of Constantine, I incline to think that it was forged long before the tenth century, and that it lay dormant, among other records as authentic as itself, till an opportunity of employing it to some pious use was found. Thus it might be employed as an inducement to Pepin to make, and as a justification of him for making, a grant of the exarchate to the see of Rome, without any regard to the rightful claim of the Greek emperor: and in this sense I choose to understand those who have called this grant a restitution, as if Pepin, when he seemed to give, did only compound with the popes, who had as good a right as forgery could communicate to the whole western empire.

In this pretended act, Constantine is made to declare his inten-

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tion to be not only that the see of Rome should have the supremacy over those of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Constantinople; but that the pontifical throne should be exalted gloriously above the imperial.* He is made to give the palace of Lateran, his diadem, and all his imperial ornaments, to Sylvester, and the popes, his successors. He is made to constitute the inferior clergy, "Romanæ ecclesiæ servientes," in the ranks of patricians and consuls. In short, he is made to say in express terms, that he yields and abandons to Sylvester, the universal pope, and the pontiffs, his successors, the city of Rome and all the provinces, places, and towns of Italy, or the occidental regions:† and that for this reason he thinks it "congruum" proper to transfer his empire into the East; since it is not just that an earthly emperor should reign where the prince of priests, and the head of the Christian religion is established by the emperor of heaven.‡

I have quoted this extraordinary piece a little the more at large, because it has been avowed genuine by the court of Rome, and has been published as such by one of the Leos; for which reason it may stand very properly here as an instance of the most impudent forgery, which the religious society ever attempted to impose on the civil, and may render all that remains to be said of these forgeries and usurpations the more probable. I know that Baronius gives it up, and would fain persuade mankind, that this act was forged by the Greeks to cast a reproach on the Roman church. I know too, that he gives up the decretal epistles, and I do not suppose, that there is any man who would have the front at this time to defend either. But these candid acknowledgments come too late, to save the honor of Rome. Her advocates defended both, as long as they could impose on ignorant ages. Nay, they attempted it even after the resurrection of letters. When these impositions could pass no longer, and when they had done the work they were designed to do, they were abandoned, as many other forged acts and false traditions have been. But are men, who confess perjury when they are convicted of it, to be received as good witnesses in any case? I think not, and therefore I insist, that the forgery of the donation, as well as that of the decretals, since these have been mentioned too, may stand as proofs of

* Amplius quàm nostrum imperium terrenumque thronum sedem sacratissimam B. Petri gloriosè exaltare.

† Contradentes et relinquentes universali papæ Romanam urbem, et omnes Italiæ seu occidentalium regionum provincias, loca, et civitates.

‡ Quoniam ubi principatus sacerdotum et Christianæ religionis caput ab imperatore cœlesti constitutum est, justum non est ut illic terrenus imperator habeat potestatem.

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the little credit we ought to give to any of those that are brought in justification of the papal pretensions to temporal or spiritual rights.

These rights have in truth no better foundation than the compact I have mentioned betwsen princes and priests. It began under Constantine, but it never appeared so grossly as under Pepin and Charles the Great. On which occasion it may be worth while to observe how much a worse bargain Constantine made with the church than the others made with the pope. What Constantine gave was immediate and real. The returns he had to expect were future, and such as never answered his expectations either in his own time, or in that of his successors, either in promoting the grandeur, or in securing the peace of the empire. The emperor was the bubble of this bargain. That which Pepin and Charles the Great made with the church, already established and powerful, was better, and in some degree the reverse of the other. Their advantages in this alliance were immediate as well as those of the pope: and who should improve them most was left to the skill and management of their successors. In the mean while, if they could not cheat one another, they bantered the rest of the world egregiously. The pope gave the title of king to Pepin, and that of emperor to Charles. These princes gave temporal dominion to the pope, and raised the opinion of his spiritual dignity and authority as high as the examples they affected to give of reverence and submission could raise it. Thus, by fortifying his usurpations, they strengthened their own: and whilst we admire the conquests whereby Charles extended his empire and that of the pope together, it is impossible not to laugh when we figure to ourselves the two usurpers kneeling to one another, the emperor asking a blessing of a man he made head of the church, the pope acknowledging the imperial sovereignty in a man he made head of the empire, and each bestowing most generously what neither of them had any right to give.

As these alliances were made on principles of human policy, and dictated by private interest alone, they were kept accordingly. Charles the Great seemed to foresee, that the alliance he had made would not be very well observed, and that the church would find means to transgress, instead of keeping within the bounds of it. He had received his crown from the pope; but he was so afraid that future popes might claim from this precedent, strained to their purpose, a right to give it, that he would not suffer any prelate to set it on the head of his son, who was elected and crowned in his presence at Aix. He ordered Louis to take it from the altar, and to crown himself. But Louis profited ill of this lesson. Even in his reign, the popes, who felt

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their strength, began to improve every opportunity of extending their prerogatives by encroachments on those that belonged to the emperors. Thus, for instance, a Leo presumed, under the pretence of a conspiracy against himself, to condemn capitally some persons without the imperial authority. The matter was examined, but the pope was not censured, he was rather screened by the imperial court, as we may presume from the extreme resentment which the people of Rome showed after his death, and from all the indignities they offered to his memory. Thus again, a Paschal seized on some of the principal men of Rome, officers of the emperor, and free from any crime but that of maintaining the imperial rights. He ordered their eyes to be put out; their hands and feet, and after these their heads, to be cut off, in the Lateran palace. An army was sent to Rome to punish this usurpation of power and excess of cruelty. His holiness purged himself of the crime by oath. But his holiness was forsworn, and having escaped the punishment, did not seem concerned to conceal the perjury; for he declared afterwards, that the persons he had caused to be executed were guilty of high treason, which he must have understood to be high treason against himself, and absolved the murderers because they were of St. Peter's family. All this and more that weak prince the Debonnaire endured from the popes, who came to such a pitch of power and insolence, by the bigotry of the age, and by the advantage they took of the troubles which arose in the empire, that in the second generation after Charlemagne, Charles the Bald was obliged to purchase the empire of the pope by very great concessions. He quitted all right to jurisdiction in Rome, and the country about it, and instead of reserving to himself that of making the election of popes valid by the imperial confirmation, he is said to have yielded that of creating and of crowning emperors to the pope.

SECTION XXXVI.

An universal and public dissolution of manners, into which the clergy in general had fallen, might have brought disgrace on the whole order, sufficient even in those ages to have opened the eyes of the laity, to have stopped their profuse charity to the church, and to have converted their blind submission into a just indignation. But, besides the favorable circumstance already mentioned, that apparent sanctity of the few which served to screen the vices of the many, it is true that this dissolution of manners received some checks from time to time.

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One of these I will point out. The synod, or the assembly of the states, for it consisted of laity and clergy both, which was held at Aix in the reign of the Debonnaire, made some reformation in the convents, where the debauchery was scandalous beyond all measure. Rules were established of stricter discipline for monks and nuns, and the Episcopal order was restrained from some excesses. Bishops were forbid to adorn their habits with gold and jewels, to wear swords and belts, to dress in scarlet and to make war. I am far from believing, that new constitutions made, or old ones renewed, had an entire effect, or produced a real reformation, but they might save some of the worst appearances, which was enough for a church wherein a spirit of policy, not a spirit of religion, prevailed. Thus much too might be easily brought about, when the exercises of true piety were changed into superstitious practices; when it cost so little to be a good bishop, a good priest, a good monk, or a great saint, that it was necessary rather to disguise than to restrain their passions; and when these men could acquire such holy characters by no greater merit than this, and even make themselves amends for disguising or restraining some of their passions by indulging others. Pride, revenge, avarice and ambition, had only their names to change, and their effects were consecrated with the greatest applause. It is easy to conceive too, that these vices of the mind were pursued with greater application, and by more persons in the common cause of the church, when sensuality and debauchery were a little more restrained; and that this kind of reformation, instead of making the clergy better men, made them only more dangerous enemies of the state.

Laymen assisted to reform the clergy without much success, churchmen continued to encroach on the laity with great success, and the breach of that alliance which Pepin and his son Charles the Great had lately made between the imperial and papal power, as Constantine had made one before between the monarchy and the hierarchy, grew wider and wider, and disturbed the whole Christian world. It could not happen otherwise, when once the bishops of Rome had resolved to be monarchs as well as the emperors, their rivals at least, perhaps their masters; and when they had acquired strength sufficient, which they were not long in acquiring to make these attempts. Examples may be produced of churchmen, and assemblies of churchmen, who have opposed, on some few occasions, the most violent excesses of papal tyranny. The particular motives they had are not always developed in history. But particular and temporary motives, arising from particular conjunctures, they

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must have had, whenever they held such a conduct. Though they had some dependence still on princes, even when the popes were grown bold enough to claim and exercise over these a most exorbitant power, yet their dependence on the pope was double wherever his supremacy was established; which I presume to have been the case in all the Christian countries of the West soon after the end of the eighth century. Princes had it in their power to show favor, in many respects, and to deal out some degrees and kinds of punishment to the members of the religious society, as we have accustomed ourselves in this essay to call the clergy. The popes had their share of this influence too, and their share was, on the whole, the greatest. But there was another influence, arising from another interest, which centered in them alone.

Of this influence princes could have no share; for it arose from an interest contrary to theirs. Princes and priests had agreed in encroaching on the rights of the civil society, according to the true spirit of their alliance, whilst the government of the church was aristocratical. But when it became monarchical the scene was changed. The groundless distinction between spiritual and temporal power had been long established, and had taken full possession of the minds of men. The former had been exercised from the time of Constantine, with no small confusion, by different churches, in different countries, and in all with much dependence on the civil power, and a real subordination to it. But Charles the great did, in effect and in consequence, unite the dispersed powers of the Western church under one direction, and raise the pope from an ecumenical bishop, with limited and disputed prerogatives, to be a spiritual emperor, with a large share of temporal dominion. This new ecclesiastical constitution, for such it may be truly called, which he made, or to which he gave occasion, might be of immediate advantage in many respects of ambition to himself. But this, like many other temporary expedients, proved fatal in its consequences. As the division of the Lombards into several dukedoms weakened their power, and prepared the way to the destruction of it; so the union of all the churches of the West under one head strengthened ecclesiastical power, and prepared the way to all the conquests it made. As soon as the religious society had an emperor of their own order at their head, the successors of Charles had no longer a prevailing influence over them. They thought it no longer necessary to keep fair with those princes, to help them and to be helped by them in plundering and subduing the civil society, as they had done before. They affected independency on all authority that was not ecclesiastical, and hoped to obtain, by conquering the emperors themselves under the papal banners,

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much greater advantages than those they had obtained already by their alliance with the imperial authority.

The contests which the popes, supported by this spirit in the clergy, raised, under the immediate successors of Charles the Great, continued during the course of many ages, and brought infinite mischief, as well as disgrace, on Christianity, that was not answerable for either. The points in dispute were few, but they were very important: and to suffer a decision of them in favor of the popes, was nothing less than to acknowledge their sovereignty in every Christian state, as well as their supremacy in every Christian church. The emperors conferred benefices, and invested the prelates by the staff and the ring. The election of the popes themselves, how much soever they had been raised above all other bishops, was so far from being independent on the emperors, that it was not reputed valid till it had been confirmed by them, nor did they confirm it till the person elected had taken an oath of submission and obedience to them. One of these perogatives was necessary to maintain that share of influence which they had left themselves over the clergy in their own dominions, and the other to check the farther growth of that monarchical power which they had helped, as well as suffered, the popes to assume in the church, and which the ecclesiastics were but too ready in every place to abet; for the bishops did not seem to perceive either time enough or strongly enough what chains they were preparing for themselves. Both the prerogatives were the more necessary to be maintained, since Charles the Great had thrown so immense a share of temporal power into the hands of the prelates as well as of the popes, by the earldoms, baronies, and other estates of much authority as well as dignity in the empire, which he gave them. Besides which, it is to be considered, that if any of the power which the emperors exercised in the investitures was usurped, it was usnrped on the Christian congregations, not on the popes: and if the popes had usurped this power out of the empire, in Britain and elsewhere, the emperors might very well think it too much to suffer, that they should profit of their own usurpations, and of those which had been made by others. As to the superiority of the imperial over the pontifical authority in general, it had not only been acknowledged in the days of heathen emperors and heretic princes, such as the Gothic kings were, but it had been exercised by the Greek emperors in matters of doctrine as well as discipline, and had been recognised most solemnly in the days of Charlemagne, in every respect of dominion and discipline at least. Many authentic monuments proved the acknowledgement: and the recognition of the imperial sovereignty was so recent, when the popes began to shake it off, that as no impudence less than that of the court

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of Rome could deny it, no ingratitude less than that of the popes could forget so soon, to whose favor they owed much of their spiritual, and all their temporal grandeur.

SECTION XXXVII.

Thus the cause of the emperors stood, whilst that of the popes was founded on nothing better than assumption, forgery, and the most barefaced usurpation. They assumed, and their advocates assume still, that Christ established a kingdom when he was on earth. They call it his church, and play with the ambiguity of the word; for when they mean to speak of the supposed actual kingdom of Christ on earth, the word church signifies the whole body of Christian people; and when they mean to speak of the governors or government of this supposed kingdom, the same word is used to signify the whole ecclesiastical order, with the pope at the head of it. To say in plain terms that Christ established a religion, a rule of faith and manners, the conformity or nonconformity to which is to be rewarded or punished by Christ himself in another life, and that he commissioned certain men to preach it, and to commission others to preach it, would not lay a foundation sufficient for the immense building that has been erected, and is still kept up, though it has tottered long. They were glad at first to found their primacy on an imperial rescript. But they soon assumed that Christ instituted a sovereign pontiff to govern this church or kingdom, that this pontiff was Peter the prince of his apostles, and that he did this agreeably to all laws divine and human; nay that he would not have shown common discretion, if he had neglected to leave such a vicar behind him as might execute all his own powers. They assume that the popes are the successors of Peter, that they have all his powers as he had Christ's and are, as he was, the vicars of Christ.* They assume a multitude of other things, relative to these, which it is unnecessary I should stay to enumerate. Now of these assumptions, which are the principal, every man is a competent judge who can read the gospels; for we must own that no powers like those which are assumed can belong to the church now, nor could belong to the apostles

* Quod divino et humano jure ita semper factum reperiretur, Christum suorum apostolorum principem constituisse Petrum. This is cited by Casaubon in his fifth exercit. on Baronius. Omnis potestas mihi data est in cœlo et in terrâ. Mat. xxviii, 18. This is the text. The papal commentary follows. Non videretur dominus discretus fuisse, ut cum reverentia ejus loquar, nisi unicum post se talem vicarium reliquisset, qui hæc omnia posset. Vide aut. glossar. in extrav. unam sanctam.

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themselves, unless they are evidently contained therein: or else we must beg the question most absurdly, as our protestant writers, and the least papal of yours, such as Du Pin and Giannone, that I may quote a lawyer as well as a divine, have done. They supposed that Christ established a society distinct from the civil, in every society where his religion should be received, by the commission given to his apostles and disciples. Let us suppose this to be true, for the sake of argument. Let us suppose, in consequence of it, that this society had a power to make laws for its own advantage and better government, provided these laws did not disturb the established order of the state, as every other particular and lawful society has by common right according to them, but not according to truth in so great a latitude. When all this is yielded to them, all that will follow is, that such a society had a power of making by-laws to which all the members of it, that is, all ecclesiastics, were subjects, and they alone. I say ecclesiastics alone, that the church sophists may not impose on us by an equivocal use of terms, nor employ the word church in one sense, in one part of their argumentation, and in another sense, in another. If they say, and they do say, that the legislative power spoken of was given to the religious society, exclusively of the civil, their argument drawn from the rights of particular societies is good, as far as their society is concerned. But if they say, and they do say, that the civil society of Christians was and is subject to these laws, they beg the question, and they grow absurd. The comparison is no longer just, nor the argument good; for though it be granted, that the by-laws of a particular society may govern that society, it is denied, that they can be laws to the whole community. Laws to the whole community, no power that is not the sovereign power in that community can prescribe. I know that the trite distinction between spiritual and temporal is always at hand. But I ask, is this power coercive or not? If it be not so, a power which begins and ends in spirituality cannot be very dangerous nor oppressive. But if it be coercive, they may call it spiritual as long as they please; it is what I just now said, the power of a particular society to make laws, not for themselves alone, but for the whole community; and as much as the church advocates endeavor to disguise the absurdity, and to evade the consequences, this is what they mean.

If this was not their meaning, to what purpose should they insist so much, or at all indeed, on the great superiority of the clergy as a more holy order over the laity, and of spiritual power and dignity over the temporal? This they have all done from Cyprian, first a magician, and afterwards a father of the Christian church, down to that learned bigot Dodwell, who wrote dis-

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sertations on him. This they do even in this country, and at this hour, as openly as they dare; for let us not be deceived by the low cunning and dissimulation of some. Whoever asserts that the ecclesiastical order is of divine institution, and by that institution independent of the state, whatever alliance this order may think fit to suppose has been made with it, says in effect all that they say who speak more openly, more honestly, and more consistently. Giannone, who wrote at Naples, carries these notions so far, that he lies open to ridicule in this particular, how respectable an author soever he be in general. He quotes Cicero to show that, in the Roman commonwealth, they who presided over the affairs of the state presided over those of religion, by a custom derived from their forefathers; and that nothing is more worthy of princes and men, distinguished by their knowledge in human affairs, than to be so likewise by their knowledge of those that are divine. He says that the two characters of king and priest were united often in heathen governments. But that the Christian religion proposing a much more noble object than the mere prosperity of states and the public tranquility, the dignity of the priesthood among Christians is separated from the imperial dignity, and raised as much above it as things divine are above things human, as the soul is more noble than the body, and as eternal happiness is preferable to that of this life. He tells us afterwards, that notwithstanding this wide difference, the two characters may be united in the same person, by an accession of the temporal to the spiritual dignity, not by any accession of the spiritual to the temporal.—The reason he gives is, because ecclesiastical dignity, being the greatest, cannot become an accession to or a dependence on the least; whereas the least may be in that relation to the greatest: and thus you see that a priest may stoop to the exercise of regal power, but a king cannot be raised up to the exercise of ecclesiastical, no, not to that of a country curate.

If a man, of as much knowledge and as little bigotry as this historian, could publish to the world, for I do not think he believed, such extravagances, in the eighteenth century, we cannot be surprised that these, and greater than these were taught, and piously believed too, in the ages of ignorance and superstition. But if the primitive clergy maintained such notions in speculation, they could not maintain them in practice. They had been sheep among wolves before Constantine. They were sheep, under the conduct of shepherds, after him: and these shepherds or principal pastors were the emperors. They became in process of time wolves among sheep: and emperors themselves were often the sheep they preyed upon. It is not only true that the emperors meddled very far in matters of religion, in matters

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of doctrine, I say, as well as of discipline; it is not only true that councils were summoned by their authority; but it is true likewise that the clergy had recourse to the same authority to confirm their canons, and to give them the force of laws. The Nicæan canons were confirmed by Constantine; those of Constantinople by Theodosius; those of the council of Chalcedonia by Marcianus: and we need go no farther than the Theodosian code, though we might do so, to prove that the bye-laws of the religious society acquired the force of laws, even in points of discipline that concerned this society alone, by the imperial, not the ecclesiastical authority, and by being inserted among the imperial constitutions. So that not only the ratification of the emperors was necessary to the doctrines they taught; but the bye-laws they made, for the government of their own society, were subject to the civil power.

It would not be hard to show, by a multitude of examples, that the church had no more claim allowed in those days to judicial and executive power, nor to the immunities and privileges she enjoyed, than she had to legislative power; that is, no more than the emperors allowed her: unless we should call the power of excommunication, which I suppose bishops exercised both before and after Constantine with the advice and consent of their presbyters alone, wherever they durst, a part of executive coercive power. But if this may be called executive, it cannot be called coercive. It was a censure, it was an exclusion from Christian congregations; but this censure, and this exclusion, operated on the imagination alone; and, the punishment being imaginary, the power was so too. It was nothing more till the increase of ecclesiastical, and the concurrence of civil authority made it more. In short, the power and dignity of the religious society were much higher in speculation and pretension, than they were in practice and reality, even for some time after the reign of Charlemagne, as high as this emperor raised them. The prelates in general, and the bishops of Rome in particular, before his time, and in it, made a show of the greatest meekness, and of the greatest humility and submission to the emperors; though they were even then in pursuit of the greatest objects of ambition. The successors of that wicked saint, Gregory, continued to take, like him, the title of servants of the servants of God, at the very time when they sacrificed all the sentiments of humanity to the pride of being called ecumenical bishops; at the very time when they meditated, nay when they attempted, to be masters of the masters of the world. By this hypocritical behavior, and by that silly distinction between spiritual and temporal power, government of the church, and government of the state, they hindered men from taking an alarm that should have been taken sooner,

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and their tyranny was established almost before it was perceived.

When the Roman bishops pulled off their mask, and began to contend openly for power with the emperors, the ecclesiastical maxims which had been assumed for evangelical truths, and the whole tendency of which had not been discerned, became of infinite service to them. These paradoxes could not be proved. But they had been admitted; and the papal pretensions might be proved, plausibly enough, to be the necessary consequences of them. Thus it happens often: a few false principles, uncautiously received, establish whole systems of error, and absurdity becomes capable of demonstration. But false speculative notions were not employed alone in the cause of the papacy. False facts and false records were necessary; and therefore forgery was added to assumption.* Forgery is a hard work, but it must be used when truth exacts that it should. I say then, that as it had been employed for holy purposes in the early ages of Christianity, it was employed, in those we speak of here, for purposes very unholy. No man dares deny the first: and the advocates of Rome themselves, Baronius and others, are obliged to confess the last. Fathers were opposed to fathers, and councils to councils, about canonical writings; traditions of the western to tradition of the eastern churches; and those that were most distant in time and place, to those that were nearest in both to the source of these very traditions. Add to all this the approved custom of speaking and writing agonistically, or with economy, that is, the custom of saying one thing and meaning another; which St. Jerom, that great critic and voucher of canonical Scriptures, avowed, practised, and recommended: add this consideration, I say, to the rest, and you will not be surprised to hear it advanced, that we know neither why the gospels, the epistles, and the apocalypse we have, were retained, or rather inserted in the canon; nor why those we have not were rejected. We are forced to be in this case absolutely implicit: and yet in this case, if in any, we ought to have proof, that councils proceeded with integrity; since there is so great reason to suspect, that the spirit of party had

* N. B. Leslie, who was in religion as much a bigot, as in politics, makes a member of the church of England assert in a supposed dialogue between him and a Roman Catholic, that there were false gospels and false epistles ascribed to several of the apostles, set up by heretics in the first age; that they were detected in that same age, whilst the originals of what the apostles wrote were still in being; but that the heretics could not produce the originals of theirs, nor did their copies agree one with another. For all this he quotes Eusebius, and adds, this was not deciding the matter by authority, but by plain evidence of a fact, as of any other forgery, or suppositious writing.

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as much to do in determining what books should be deemed canonical, as what doctrines should be deemed orthodox.

But in the other case, we are not obliged to be so implicit. If all the canons of ancient councils, and every other ecclesiastical monument, had remained in the hands of the popes alone, we may assure ourselves, that they would have been all corrupted and interpolated, as such writings are more than any others exposed to be, and that those which could not be made to speak the language of the Roman court would have been suppressed. Happily this suppression was not practicable in a full extent, many of these ancient records having been preserved in other churches; and it is by the help of them that so many forgeries have been detected since the resurrection of letters. Some had been detected near a thousand years sooner occasionally, when the popes began first and faintly to stretch their primacy into a supremacy; a flagrant instance of which is the pretension, that was set on foot by one of them early in the fifth century, to a jurisdiction over the churches of Africa. This pretension was founded on a forged canon of the Nicæan council. I say forged, because, when the African bishops, and among them, St. Austin, had procured an authentic copy of these canons from the East, no such canon appeared among them. Other instances of occasional forgery there are; but we may say, without exaggeration, that, from the seventh century at the latest downwards, Rome was a storehouse of false traditions, false records, and every kind of forgery that could be of use to establish the ecclesiastical supremacy of her bishops first; and when that was done, their superiority of dignity and jurisdiction over all the other powers of the earth. This fund increased continually, too, from the sixth or seventh centuries. The more, and the more important the usurpations of this church were, the more such materials as these were wanted: and accordingly we find the times of the great increase, and the great want of them, coincide. The first decretals were forged, most probably, in the seventh century: and though there has been much dispute, whether the apostolical constitutions were made by the apostles, or by their immediate disciples, as if it were impossible they should be of a later date, yet is it an opinion more probable than either, that they are really no older than the sixth century.

What has been said in this essay may serve to show, how little respect would be due to the canons of councils, if they were genuine. But how much reason have we to neglect and despise them, when we consider by whom they were collected, and at what eras these collections came into repute; when we add, to the little authority of the canons themselves, the little credit that the men who collected them, and who corrected and published

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them, deserve! Dionysius, the little Scythian abbot, made the first collection of them, at least the first that came into general use, in the sixth century and at Rome. After the eighth they were mingled up with decrees of popes, and constitutions of Charlemagne, the great instrument, as well as patron, of papal usurpations. The Benedictine monk, Gratian, made a new collection in the twelfth century, and stuffed it with texts of Scripture, as well as of opinions of fathers. Of the former we may say, properly enough *non erat his locus*, and of the latter, that they do not deserve even the name of *responsa prudentum*. If he was, and I think he was, brother of the master of the sentences, the two brothers established the two most impertinent sciences that ever puzzled the heads of men and disturbed the peace of the world, canon law and scholastic theology. I say nothing of the Clementines, nor the Extravagants. They were published when the tyranny of Rome was already confirmed, and are as little to my purpose to be mentioned as the decretals published by that madman Boniface the Eighth.

Such was the origin of that system of law which is called the canon law, and by the prevalence of which the bishop of one city, and a few suburbicarian provinces, invaded and subjected to his authority the civil laws of every country, the laws of nations, and the laws of nature themselves. Many of the decrees of popes, that the monkish collectors foisted into this ecclesiastical code, had not been made, very probably, many of them had not been executed, very certainly, at the time; and on the occasions pretended; and yet they all acquired, in process of time, a supposed authenticity, and became precedents alike. Just so, by an inversion of all the rules of good criticism and of common sense, their other forgeries got into credit. The least of these were false representations of things true. By them vain ceremonies, which the popes were admitted to perform, and vain compliments, which emperors and princes paid them, came in after-ages to pass for acknowledgments of a right, and presents that were made them, nay bribes that were given them, for tribute. The greatest were those gross lies, and all those fabulous relations which they invented, and propagated, to nourish superstition, or to justify usurpation, which were not only void of all foundation, but often irreconcileable to history and chronology; and which, however, were repeated till they were believed, on the faith of fabulous legends. Thus they builded up a sovereignty, at all times the most absurd, and for a long time the most tyrannical, that had ever been felt over the western world. An uniform system of ambition steadily and artfully pursued, from one generation to another, through ages of ignorance and superstition, wherein it was easy to impose on the understand-

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ings of men, and to direct their consciences, established this tyranny little by little. It grew up fastest from the time it was established in the out-skirts of the empire, in Britain, and in Spain for instance. It grew up less in France, and it was reverenced least of all at Rome. The Romans were pleased to see their city become the seat of chimerical, when it was so no longer of real empire. But then they used their pontiffs, as they had sometimes used their emperors. They abetted their conquests abroad, and treated their persons ignominiously at home. These pontiffs were never more respected in foreign nations, than they were at the time when they gave the greatest scandal, and received the greatest insults in Italy. By the means and by the conduct that have been mentioned, however, they were able, even in such circumstances, to assert with success the most exorbitant of their pretensions against the greatest emperors.

This success varied indeed on some particular occasions; but on the whole, and in the event, it was in their favor. Thus, that I may quote two examples at least, the first Otho deposed John the Thirteenth, in the tenth century, for debauchery and treason; directed and confirmed the election of Leo the Eighth; restored this pope when he had been expelled from his seat by a rival; chose another, and re-established the imperial right to grant investitures, and to nominate the bishops of Rome, which prerogatives had been lost by the successors of Charlemagne. Thus on the other hand, Gregory the Seventh, in the next century, taking up the contest about these very prerogatives, which was again on foot, carried it on with so much success, that all circumstances considered, by what he effected, and by what he put it in the power of his successors to effect, he may be esteemed a worse man and a greater conqueror than Alexander or Cæsar. In this contest, he had the address to gain to his side the mother and the aunt of the emperor, Henry the Fourth, and to debauch, in every sense of the word, perhaps, his cousin german, the countess Matilda. At least, the manner in which she lived with this dirty monk, and which was not at all necessary to the support of a cause, she might and did affect to favor on a religious principle, justifies the accusation sufficiently. He made the Saxons revolt; he divided the empire; he excommunicated the emperor and all his adherents over and over: and when he was asked, by what right he had presumed to deprive this prince of his crown, and to absolve the subjects of the empire from the allegiance they had sworn to him? He answered, that he had done it conformably to customs and usages of his predecessors.* Such customs and such usages, before Hildebrand,

* Maim. Decad. de l'Empire.

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were entirely unknown to the most learned men in former ages, as well as in ours. But Hildebrand had precedents ready to allege, and some such are, I believe, mentioned in letters of his writing. How, indeed, should he want them, when Rome was a store-house of acts of papal power which were never executed, nor would have been suffered at the times when they pretended to have been executed, but were laid up to be produced on future occasions? This instance may serve to prove, by the way, therefore, the truth of what is said above; for whether the pope invented these fabulous relations himself, or whether his secretary furnished him with false documents, as I learn by a note of Bayle it has been supposed in his excuse, these lies were coined in the papal mint. To conclude, this emperor, who came, it is said, victorious out of more than sixty combats, and who had forced his enemy from Rome into an exile from which he never returned at Salerne, was deposed, dethroned, and confined to the prison where he died, by his son, Henry the Fifth, whom Paschal the Second encouraged in his rebellion, and excited to this cruelty.

After the death of Henry the Fourth, the popes completed their usurpations very soon. As they robbed the emperors of the right to confirm their elections, they robbed the clergy and the people of the right to elect them; for it was decreed at Mantua, that the cardinals alone should choose the popes. In a council held at Troyes, it was decreed, that investitures to benefices belong to the sovereign pontiff alone; because religion was polluted, said these reverend fathers, when persons dedicated to the service of the heavenly and immortal King became subjects and vassals of an earthly and mortal prince. In a council held at Rheims, Henry the Fifth, who had taken up his father's quarrel with the popes, though he had rebelled in the same quarrel against his father, was excommunicated; and these circumstances, with others discernible enough in history, determined him to a composition. He gave up the right of investitures; for he consented to hold it by a grant from the pope, and not as an imperial prerogative. He consented too, that this grant should be restrained to him personally, and that the prerogative should belong solely to the see of Rome after his decease. The popes were now arrived at that height of power and independence which had been so long the object of their ambition. They have maintained themselves in it, as they attained to it, by fomenting rebellions, assassinations, massacres, and by employing superstition to keep up, in every state, a private conscience favorable to the ecclesiastical, and dangerous to the civil authority. Such have been the consequences of an alliance between the monarchy and the hierarchy; (for those who talk of an alli-

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ance between the religious and civil society, deserve only contempt, when they affirm, with fact and common sense both against them) and I believe, that from the days of Charles the Great to the reformation, no instance can be brought of a contest between them, wherein the bishops of Rome have not prevailed in the whole, or in some very essential points, by the wise maxim of observing conjunctures, and of pushing their pretensions to the utmost with violence and insolence; or of reducing them to terms of real or seeming moderation. When conjunctures were favorable, they bullied and usurped; when these were unfavorable they whined: composed, if they could, and if they could not, submitted. Had the civil powers of Europe seen their danger in time, and united against it, these things could not have happened, nor the Christian church have become a perpetual source of the greatest evils to the Christian world. But the civil powers were divided, and the popes growing of more and more consequence, as their dignity and authority increased, every side was glad to have them, and the side that bid most, or yielded most, was sure to have them. France had raised and protected them; and France afforded a terrible example, even as lately as the sixteenth century, of her own mistaken policy in the ninth and following centuries.

Notwithstanding the great success which the popes had, and the superiority they acquired over all Christian princes by acquiring it over the emperors, the struggle was hard; the event had been sometimes doubtful, and it was not very certain that they would be able to maintain the rights they had already usurped, or to keep the laity in constant awe by the thunder of excommunications. To make their work sure, therefore, they judged it necessary to invent still new expedients, and to improve every old one that had served to exalt ecclesiastical power and dignity. They did more. They found means to divert the attention of mankind from Europe to Asia, and to confirm insensibly the tyranny they had usurped, by engaging the princes and states of the West to undertake romantic expeditions for extending it into the East. The epidemical madness of the crusades, which ambition, superstition, and licentiousness combined to nourish, lasted two hundred years; and if these unholy wars did not extend the dominion of the church, nor establish the papal power in the countries where they were made, both the church and the popes found their account in them several ways, where they meant much more to find it. The crusades were conspiracies of the religious against the civil society of Europe. These two societies were nearly on a balance of power. The crusades turned it in favor of the former. Mezeray thinks that the uneasy and dangerous situation of his affairs

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in Italy, determined Urban the Second to come into France, when he held the council of Clermont there, and that the promoting of the first expedition against the Saracens was nothing more than a pretence he took. But he had no need of any such pretence. He was a Frenchman; and France, as Mezeray himself says, was the ordinary refuge of the popes. Besides, when he had resolved to put in execution this unchristian project, he could not fail to see that there was no country then in Europe wherein this scene of farce, which was to produce so many scenes of tragedy, could be acted with so much advantage as in France. Italy and Germany were divided between him and the emperor. Spain was the theatre of one perpetual war against the Moors. Britain was superstitious enough, but Britain lay in a remote corner of the world; the Norman invasion was just over, and the new government scarce settled. France was liable to none of these objections; and the success which his holiness had there might surpass his expectations, as it surpasses almost the belief of posterity. The enthusiastical fury, for such it was, infused at Clermont by the pope, and fomented by his emissaries every where else, became at once an epidemical distemper, and all Europe grew delirious. Princes abandoned their dominions, and private men their patrimonies, to the care and protection of the church. Besides innumerable frauds that the clergy committed, the regulars especially, to invade the possessions of the laity; the laity was obliged to sell them on these occasions, and the clergy was ready and able to buy. No wonder, therefore, since power always follows property, if the religious society was strengthened by being enriched; if the civil was weakened by being impoverished, and if, upon the whole, the church gave the law to the state.

Many other expedients were employed, like so many underprops to support the same system. They were less observed as such, because they carried an appearance of religious austerity and self-denial, of edification not of acquisition. Some of the men who furnished these expedients, and who made them effectual to the purposes of ecclesiastical ambition, were the bubbles and the victims of their own superstitious zeal. But fools have been always led, in matters of religion especially, by designing knaves. Hermits had been summoned from their solitudes, on some occasions, to support a turbulent seditious bishop; one example of which has been referred to above. How much more easy was it for that universal bishop, the pope, when religious orders multiplied, as they did prodigiously in the ages we speak of here, and when, whoever instituted, he confirmed them, to employ these standing armies of monks more silently, but more effectually too, in his service? The crusades

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gave much occasion to these institutions; and the extravagance was carried so far that military orders were instituted among the rest, that is, orders of men whose particular profession obliged them to defend and propagate Christianity, as long as they lived, by cutting of throats. This indeed was the general profession of all those who took the badge of the cross, whenever a pope thought fit, for the time at least for which they engaged. I say, whenever a pope thought fit; because this cruel expedient, which had been employed originally against the Mahometans, was employed afterwards against Christians, against all such as were called heretics, when every man was called by that name who did not, because he could not, think as the church of Rome ordered him to think, or who exclaimed against the abominable corruptions of that court.

Among the expedients by which the religious society was attached to the pope independently of their lawful sovereigns, and to the church independently of the state, that of a forced celibacy was one. They were a distinct order of men, and had a separate interest from the other society before. But by this institution, every band that might have united, some of them at least to it, was cut off, under the specious pretence of a greater degree of Christian purity and perfection. Monks and nuns took a vow of chastity, wherein celibacy was included, according to the logic employed for this political purpose: and it was manifestly necessary to the same purpose, that the secular clergy should be put under the same restraint. They were intended to mingle, more than the others, with civil society. Their habitudes were much the same, and their interest not so separate. There was, therefore, the more danger that they might contract a love for the civil constitution of their country, prefer their king to the pope, and reverence a parliament or assembly of the states more than a council. All that could be done to prevent so great a mischief was to hinder this attachment to their country from increasing, by that natural attachment whch fathers of families have to their children. This was seen early, and the bishops of Rome had taken upon them, as far back as the seventh century, to forbid the marriages of priests. Their orders had been rejected by some, by the Spaniards particularly, and had been ill obeyed in general. But celibacy was now enjoined more strictly, and enforced more powerfully. Decrees of popes, canons of councils, all kinds of authority, were employed: and it must be confessed, to the honor of ecclesiastical policy, that the yoke imposed was rendered as light as possible by connivance, and even by indulgence. The concubinage of priests was tolerated, nunneries became brothels, and if among the standing expenses of convents, a reasonable allowance was not made to the monks for

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the necessary expenses of fornication "ad purgandos renes," and on a principle of health, which has been said, but may be denied; this at least is notorious, that the fathers were left to provide for their health, in the best manner that they could, by simple fornication, or by adultery.

As this expedient attached the whole clergy, more intimately, to the general interest of the church, and to the particular interest of the pope, auricular confession and private penance were designed to attach the people more intimately to the clergy.* Public confessions and public penance, as they had been practised in the primitive church, might impose more, and be a greater restraint on vice and immorality. But when it was thought sufficient that all this passed privately between the confessors and the penitents, many advantages, which were deemed preferable to such a restraint, resulted from the modern practice. Penitents were exempted from public shame; if they blushed, they blushed in a corner: and confessors had the most secret transactions, nay the thoughts and designs, of mankind in their keeping. They had more: they had not only a general influence over private conscience, but the means of exercising this influence in private; the means of teaching privately what they dared not preach publicly, and of instilling into the minds of men every principle and passion they pleased. This expedient advanced the papal empire more than any: it made the bishop of Rome, in some circumstances, as terrible as the old man of the mountain, and enabled ecclesiastical ambition to do, more directly, more regularly, and more constantly than before, all the mischief that has been imputed to religion. A very moderate knowledge of history, ecclesiastical and civil, ancient and modern, will furnish examples enough to confirm this truth. It is impossible to read without horror, for instance, the accounts we have of the ambition, insolence, and perfidy of Hadrian and Alexander, in their disputes with Frederic the First, whom Hadrian, like the king of the assassins, endeavored to have drowned, stabbed, or destroyed by magic; and whom Alexander, they say, insulted, in the words of the psalmist, "super aspidem et basiliscum ambulabis." As little can we read, without the same sentiment, the proceedings of Gregory the Ninth, a worthy successor of the Seventh, in the next century, that is the thirteenth, against the second Frederic. But if all these histories, and others of the same kind were wanting, and we had no other than that of

* N. B. Whatever private confessions, as well as others, might have been practised anciently, the law by which every person is obliged once in a year, I think, to confess all his sins to his proper priest, was not made till Innocent the Third got it enacted, among several that were calculated merely to advance the power and authority of the priesthood, in the Lateran council.

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Thuanus, that of Thuanus alone would serve the purpose, and the better for being nearer our own time. That wise and honest historian acknowledges, that all the iniquities of the league were hatched and nursed up to maturity in the confessionals; after which, the effects of this private influence were publicly avowed, the sovereignty of the popes over all other sovereigns, in matters of religion, and in matters appertaining to religion, the infallibility of their judgments, their dispensing and deposing power, the duty of rebellion in some cases, and the merit of assassination in others, were propagated from the pulpits: and what their pastors preached, the people executed.

It might be expected, perhaps, that the quarrels which arose after the reign of Charles the Great, from a conflict of spiritual and temporal prerogatives and jurisdiction, as well as those disturbances which arose from dissenting opinions about articles of faith, and points of doctrine, long before his time, would be appeased, and prevented for the future, by the establishment of this papal monarchy. But, if such an expectation was entertained, it was wholly disappointed. The successors of Gregory the Seventh took every opportunity of asserting their right to all the powers, temporal and spiritual, that he had claimed, and of exercising them as vicars of Christ. There is a decree of Boniface the Eighth, who was less able, less successful, and more mad, if possible, than Hildebrand, that holds its place in the canon law, and that declares subjection to the Roman pontiff necessary to the salvation of every human creature.* This subjection too is not confined to spirituals; for, in the Extravagants, he claims a right to the two swords, and asserts a jurisdiction over all temporal, as well as spiritual authority.† This jurisdiction was confirmed by the council of Lateran, and was founded in the theology of those doctors, who made a Christianity of their own, with little regard to that of Christ whose name it bore, and often in plain contradiction to his gospel. Thus St. Thomas, the evangelical doctor, as he has been called very improperly and very impertinently, pretended to prove, by shameful prevarications, that such a submission as the popes required was an essential condition of salvation; and he, like the rest of his tribe, and their masters the popes, inflamed the dissensions about articles of faith and doctrines, as much as about prerogatives and jurisdictions.

To what purpose should I quote any more instances, to show that this has been the proceeding of the church of Rome, as I

* Subesse Romano pontifici.

† Regem se regum, mundi monarcham, unicum in spiritualibus et temporalibus dominum promulgavit.

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have asserted before, and as I assert now over again, from the eleventh and twelfth centuries! The fact is notorious. But yet this doctrine had never been acquiesced in universally. Sometimes kings, nay, sometimes councils, had opposed it: and the reformers, in the sixteenth century, were so far from advancing any thing new on this head, that numbers of Christians in the West, as well as all the churches in the East, had constantly disowned it during every intervening age, and that the former had suffered, rather than to own it, the most cruel persecutions. Thus the same conflicts of jurisdiction were frequently renewed, and the same calamities continued by the same pertinacious spirit of ambition; till princes being tired with these struggles, they came little by little, at different times and in different places, to certain terms of accommodation. Princes renewed with the popes their former alliances with the hierarchy, and compounded the best they could with the tyrant they had acknowledged. But notwithstanding these compositions, and though the popes dare not exercise their pretended rights as they did formerly, they keep up their pretensions, in hopes that an happy revival of ignorance and barbarity may do them, sooner or later, as much good as the unhappy resurrection of letters did them hurt.

SECTION XXXVIII.

Such as I have sketched them rudely, but truly, were the ecclesiastical and papal usurpations on civil sovereignty, complete almost before avowed, and opposed as soon as avowed. But the other usurpations of Rome were different in their direction, and in their course. The intention of these being to vest in the bishop of that see the sole right of deciding in matters of faith and doctrine, either immediately without, or ultimately with the concurrence of a council, and by way of confirmation, they were plainly directed against all the inferior ranks in the hierarchy: and thus, whilst princes and states defended their own rights by constant, though unconcerted efforts, they left the pope at liberty to deal with his subjects, for such the clergy, even the prelates had made themselves, as he thought fit, and to proceed in his judgments with their advice, or without it. The consequence soon followed; the laity believed as the church taught, and the church taught as the pope pronounced. But we must not imagine, that this usurpation on a prerogative the church had always exercised by her representative assemblies, convened without the papal authority, and acting independently on it, was admitted, because either the religious or the civil society thought it belonged to the pope by divine right; or, because the former

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being unable to resist it without the abatement and aid of the latter, the latter neglected it as uuconcerned in it. Neither of these societies could believe, that this prerogative belonged to the pope by divine right, which the greatest authorities and the recent practice of the whole ecclesiastical order contradicted: and if we consider the passages of preceding ages, we shall find reason to believe, that princes and civil magistrates did not suffer this usurpation to take place, because they neglected it, or thought themselves unconcerned in it, but because they desired, that it might take place. What is here said deserves to be explained: and when it is so, though it be simply my conjecture, I think it will justify itself.

From the time there had been such a thing as Christianity in the world, Christians had been divided not only about compliments, rites and ceremonies, "such silly things," says Hooker, "that very easiness doth make them hard to be disputed about in serious munner,"* but about every important article of their religion; and as soon as they had power in their hands, they persecuted one another, and disturbed the peace of the empire. To remedy this evil, councils were employed: but councils defined and decreed to little purpose. To support their decisions, the authority of the emperors was employed. Some of these, like Theodosius, made the most sanguinary laws, and exercised the most cruel tyranny, in the cause of orthodoxy. Others of them seemed to have so much concern for the church, that they had none for the empire; like Honorius, who was extremely busy at Ravenna in punishing Manicheans, Donatists, Priscillianists, and heretics of every denomination, whilst the Goths marched without opposition to Rome. All this, however, proved ineffectual, and new heads sprouted out from the hydra of theology, as fast as the spiritual and temporal swords lopped them off. It could not be otherwise. The Scriptures are a sure criterion of orthodoxy, when they are applied no farther than they were designed to be such: and they could be designed to be such no farther than they are intelligible and plain. He who pretends to employ this rule any farther, profanes the Scriptures, and abuses himself or others. This criterion, considered under the image of a rule, may be said to mark out to us the great points, the inches, and the feet, for instance. But the less dimensions, the lines, for instance, are not marked, or they are not discernible. The master builder, who put this rule into our hands, that we might work out our salvation by it, proportioned the rule to the work. How came we then, paltry builders that we are! to mark new and more minute divisions on this rule; to alter it, under pretence

* Ep. Dedicat.

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of making it more complete, and to measure and to build by guess? The gospel is the rule: theology is the rule, thus altered. He who adheres to one, founds his religion on divine, he who adheres to the other, on human authority; the first infallible and fixed, the second precarious and variable.

Metaphysics and tradition, their own whimsies and those of their predecessors, guided the clergy, and constituted their theology. They never considered the word of God naked, if I may say so, nor ever looked at it, except through a theological medium, through which every man might see whatever he had a mind to see in it. Many of the questions that arose, were, in no degree, objects of reason: and no men living were less fit than the fathers of the church, the greatest of them, St. Chrysostom or St. Jerom, and St. Ambrose or St. Austin, to speak or write on any subject, that required a clear determination of ideas, a closeness of reasoning, an evangelical candor, or even common ingenuousness. Besides that it was difficult very often to know whether these men spoke sincerely, or with economy, they declaimed much: and those of them, who pretended to reason, reasoned ill. They preverted the sense, and defamed the characters of their adversaries: they quibbled and cavilled, and then decided dogmatically on subjects they did not understand; as St. Austin did, I presume, in the case of Pelagianism, and in the doctrine of absolute predestination, which he, after St. Paul, and Calvin after him, endeavored to establish. Their personal partialities, the spirit of party and faction were manifest; as in the case of Origen, who did great honor and service to the Christian church, and yet was condemned by the same prelate that ordained Synesius bishop of Ptolemais, though the honest philosopher declined this honor, and declared he would neither abandon his wife, nor several of those Platonic opinions, that were repugnant to the Christian doctrine. There are so many examples to justify this charge, in every part of it, that if any choleric divine should presume to deny it, the same fate might attend him and the fathers he took under his protection, as attended them and the monk who defended them against Barbeyrac. The charge might be proved out of their own works, and their theology shown to be no better than their ethics.

I have touched over again, among others some things that have been mentioned already, in order to introduce my conjecture about the reason that might determine the civil powers to make no opposition to the popes when they assumed first an absolute authority, even superior to that of councils, in matters of faith, and in all matters of doctrine and discipline. Their reason must have been political. It could not be religious.— The manner of holding the first council at Jerusalem, and the

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manner of decreeing in it, as they are represented in the fifteenth of the Acts, made strongly for the councils, and not at all for the popes. This was certainly the first council, a precedent for all others, and the foundation of their authority over the whole church. No man, I believe, before Baronius, had discovered that Christ himself held a council, and that he presided in it when he called his disciples to him and asked them first, as one who inquired about news, whom men said that he was; and next as a president who took their opinions whom they said that he was.* But this little sophistry was meant to insinuate, that as Christ gave the keys on this occasion to Peter and his successors, so he gave them particularly a superiority over councils, nay, that he rendered these the least useful assemblies in the world. Peter alone pronounced the decree of this type of a council,† and though, the others assented, no doubt, yet does it not appear that the form of consulting them was observed. The practice of the church afforded no more reason, than the terms of the gospel, for this superiority of the popes over councils; but the woeful experience of many ages showed how inadequate the institution of councils themselves was to the purpose of preserving uniformity in Christian churches, and peace in Christian states: and this political consideration became a sufficient reason to the civil powers for favoring, or at least for not opposing the usurpation of the popes in the instance we speak of here.

It had been found necessary, even in the apostolical age, to elect a presbyter in every church, who might preserve the unity of it by his authority, and prevent the schisms which arose perpetually. This was the institution of bishops. As Christianity spread, as bishops multiplied, as they grew more powerful, and as theology grew more and more contentious, the same expedient, that had been found useful, if not wholly effectual, to preserve the uniformity of particular churches, might seem the most proper to be employed for the same purposes in the universal church: and in this case who so fit to be the universal bishop as the bishop of Rome? Rome had been the seat of empire, when the empire had been in its glory. If the dignity of cities was to determine, as it had always done, the dignity of sees, there was none that could vie with that of Rome. If a right derived from St. Peter, the supposed prince of the apostles was to determine, there was none neither, in this case, to vie with that of Rome. Antioch, the first bishopric of Peter, had yielded to the second imperial city, Constantinople. Who could vie then with the bishop of the first imperial city, that pretended,

* Matt. xvi. Mark viii. Luke ix.

† Actio Christi typum quendam exprimit celebrandi concilium.

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and was believed to have been the second bishopric of Peter, as well as the scene of his martyrdom?

It is true, that some bishops of Rome had erred most grievously in their judgments, and been scandalous in their manners. But others had retrieved, in some degree, the honor of the see: and if the heresies and vices of popes were made objections against them, in this case, what church was there that could boast an uninterrupted succession of orthodox and pious prelates? In short, all the churches of the West had contracted, in process of time, such an habitual reverence for that of Rome, that her opinions in matters of religion and conscience had been frequently asked, and that the judgments of her bishops had been received with an apparent submission, even by those who did not acknowledge, till long afterwards, a power to impose them. The churches of Spain and of Gaul afford a most remarkable instance to our present purpose, in the famous case of the procession of the Holy Ghost. Both of them paid a great regard to the papal authority in matters of this kind: the latter, I think, most and soonest; though the former has outstripped her since in a bigot attachment to it: and yet both these churches had added the words "filioque," in order to declare their belief, that the Holy Ghost proceeded from the son as well as the father, to the Constantinopolitan creed, not only without, but against the consent of the popes. This addition too was not only maintained three hundred years together, but imposed, at last, on the church of Rome; one of her infallible bishops having admitted it into his creed very wisely, and chosen to authorise, what he could not alter, rather than suffer so great a part of the Western church to stand in opposition to his infallibility, at the very time when the establishment of it was attempted.

After this time the clergy grew more obsequious to the popes, and more insolent to their princes; for as the power of the former increased, their independence of the latter increased with it. If it had not been so, we should have heard of more oppositions to the doctrines of Rome, and those we do hear of would have prevailed sooner. But as the civil power desired nothing more than an uniformity of belief for the sake of peace, and thought that this uniformity could be preserved no way so well as by giving to one bishop a superintendency over the faith of the whole church, two things followed of course. One we know. The other we may conjecture from what we know. We know, that civil and ecclesiastical power united their efforts to exterminate, by inquisitions, by crusades, and all the cruelties they were able to exercise, every sect that arose in direct and open opposition to the doctrines and decisions of the church of Rome. We conjecture, that in cases where the opposition was more con-

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fined, and more disguised, where it seemed directed to diminish, rather than to abolish the authority of the popes, the same thing happened formerly in many places which we see happen in France at this day. A great number of the inferior clergy, few of the prelates, refused to accept the constitution unigenitus. The former have been discountenanced and oppressed without much noise; and those of them that persist, persist in silence and obscurity. The others die off, and are replaced by men more complaisant and more politic. Thus the opposition to this bull will make no figure in history, and the doctrine of it will pass for that of the whole Gallican church conforming implicitly to a papal constitution. The pretended explanations, restrictions, and other prevarications, that were employed to trim between God and the pope, will remain in the pamphlets of the time alone, and in the closets of antiquaries. Thus an appearance of uniformity in matters of faith has been, and may be imposed on posterity, by stifling the proofs of the contrary: and if this failed, the church would have nothing more to do to preserve the illusion of uniformity, than what she has done so often and so long; to quote those alone who have spoken the same language as she speaks, and to take no notice of others, or to pass them by as heretics whose suffrage ought not to be brought to account.

The pope is a general; the clergy a standing army, which has fought his battles, like other armies, without any regard to the justice or injustice of the cause: and the common soldiers of which, as of other armies, have sometimes mutinied in particular quarters, the general officers seldom, the whole or the greater part never. That even the common soldiers of this army should mutiny at any time, may appear the more extraordinary, because no general ever recompensed the zeal of private men in his cause more signally than the pope has done. He procured them free quarters and very lucrative exemptions in every Christian country. He abetted their insolence and employed every artifice, as well as his whole power to impose on the superstition of mankind a high conceit of the dignity of this spiritual militia. One artifice of this sort, the most extravagant that was ever invented, and the most effectual at the same time, shall be produced. You may be surprised, perhaps, when I say it was the doctrine of transubstantiation.

SECTION XXXIX.

Nothing could be more intelligible, nor even to human judgment more reasonable than the institution of the Lord's supper; since the sole design of it was that Christians should commemo-

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rate in common the death of Christ and the redemption of mankind, as well as signify, by participating of the same bread and the same wine, that they were of the same religion, if, as Erasmus says in paraphrasing St. Paul, "videtur agnoscere communem religionem qui communibus cibis vescitur."* But refinements, and figurative expressions employed about it, made the plainest thing in the world mystical and unintelligible. The effects of the eucharist were made so first, and the very elements, the bread and the wine, became so afterwards. This sacrament was no longer a simple act of commemoration and of profession. It was made a great and dreadful mystery, of which Christians may partake to their damnation, as well as to their salvation. The person, by whom it was instituted, is represented sometimes under images that render it impossible to frame any of the efficacy, or even of the institution of this sacrament. Christ is a vine, he is a rock, nay he is a coat according to St. Paul; and we clothe ourselves with him in our baptism, according to St. Chrysostom. According to the same eloquent father too, he stands to us in the relation of a head of a house, of a table and of a root.† Now one of these images alone can give us any imperfect idea of the efficacy of this sacrament. Christ is the head of a body, and the faithful are the members. The same loaf is made up of many crumbs, the same body of many members:‡ and therefore, according to St. Paul's reasoning, all those who eat of one loaf compose one body.§ Thus Christ is, in this community, at once the son of God and the brother of man. The brother, but the elder brother, of the elect;‖ and in the epistle to the Ephesians we are said to be flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone, "ex carne ejus et ossibus ejus." These immense and inexplicable advantages are to be ascribed, principally, to the efficacy of this mysterious sacrament. By baptism, we are made partakers of the Holy Ghost. By this sacrament we are made such of the body and blood of Christ. But I will conclude, instead of citing any more particular instances, by borrowing from Casaubon some general words, that may serve to show how high men's notions have been raised about this theological mystery by the theological abuse of figures. "The eucharisty, rightly taken, is the instrument of that conjunction

* Paraph. in Ep. ad Cor. Ep. 1, ch. x, v. 15.

† ——Christum suis esse non solum caput, domum, mensem, radicem sed etiam vestem quando in baptismo Christus induatur. Vid. Casaub. in exercit.

‡ Panis ex innumeris granis sic conflatus est——corpus sic ex diversis membris constat.—Paraph. Eras.

§ Quoniam unus panis, unum corpus multi sumus, omnes qui de uno pane participamus.—Ep. ad Corin. 1. ch. x.

‖ Primogenitus in multis fratribus, Ep. ad Rom. viii. 29.

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by which we grow into one body with the Son of God, and with all the faithful—What can be more admirable, what more stupendous than that man should be thus joined and coalited with God, the creature with the Creator, the mortal with the immortal, the finite with the infinite, and earth with heaven? This miracle is greater than that of creating a world out of nothing.* I think it is, but I think too, that it would be as easy to distinguish the most extravagant language that Platonic or Pythagorean enthusiasts ever held out of blasphemy, as these orthodox expressions.

The yoke of Christianity is easy, and the burden light. But if theology has shortened the decalogue, it has lengthened the creed, and has maintained hitherto in the enlightened ages such a tyranny over the minds of men, in opposition to reason and revelation too, as could not be established in the darkest without much difficulty. In the case just mentioned, concerning the mystical effects of the eucharisty, we are required by human authority to believe, that the most divine and important truths are concealed under a variety of figurative expressions, which have no conceivable applications, at least none that are conceivable to us uninspired persons, or else such as cannot be made by us, without a profanation that shocks the ear of every man who keeps up in his mind an awful sense of the majesty of the Supreme Being; nor dares to think, like those whom we call divines, as familiarly and as lowly of God as of man. In the case that is to be mentioned concerning the elements, as they are called, of the eucharisty, your church requires, and the whole Christian church did require before the reformation, that we should believe substances which give us the ideas of bread and wine, both before and after consecration, to be, after it, such substances as give us the ideas of flesh and blood. If we should say, that in fact they give us these ideas, we should lie most impudently: and if we should say, as you pretended catholics do say, that, though they give us still the ideas of bread and wine, yet they are miraculously flesh and blood, we should talk a language that passes on millions, and yet can pass on no one man who consults his reason impartially, or who considers the proofs of Christian revelation by miracles, which are, in truth, appeals to the senses.

* ——Eucharistiam legitimo modo sumptam instrumentum esse ejus conjunctionis, per quam in corpus unum cum filio Dei——coalescimus, et cum cæteris etiam omnibus fidelibus——quid magis admirabile aut magis stupendum, quàm jungi, atque adeo coalescere in corpus unum, hominem cum Deo, creaturam cum Creatore, mortalem cum immortali, finitum cum infinito, cœnum cum cœlo. Hoc majus est miraculum, quàm de nihilo mundum creasse.

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We are all conscious, or very little experiment and reflection will suffice to make us so, that we know nothing more of substances than their effects. God has given us no other way of distinguishing them: and if we abandon that, nothing can be affirmed or denied concerning them. A miracle may change one substance into another, as water was changed into wine at the feast in Galilee. But the accidents cannot remain, and the substance be changed; or to speak more plainly, a different substance must produce different ideas in us. A supernatural operation must be sensible, or it is no more a miracle than if nothing was operated. The guests at Cana would not have believed that the water was turned into wine, if they had not been convinced of the change by their taste: and if the disciples were convinced, after his resurrection, that Jesus was the same Christ who had been crucified, it was because they said that they saw him to be the same, and that one of them probed the wounds he had received on the cross. According to the first example then, the communicants in your church should eat raw flesh, and the priest by his peculiar privilege should drink warm blood; for the transubstantiation is instantaneous: and, according to the last example, if the elements in the eucharisty continue to the sight and taste the same, they are the same bread and the same wine, after consecration, that they were before.

He who should think to evade the absurdity, by insisting that God works two miracles at once, that he changes the bread and wine into flesh and blood, and that to exercise our faith he alters the physical constitution of the elect in such a manner, on this occasion, that flesh and blood produce in them the ideas of bread and wine, he, I say, who should think so, would only increase the absurdity by endeavoring to evade it, as they who are in the dirt, dirty themselves more by endeavoring to get out of it. He would assume a miracle and no miracle, or rather a miracle contrived to disguise a miracle, and a fraudulent imposition on our senses for the excellent purpose of exercising faith against knowledge, and in direct contradiction to all the proofs that Christ gave of the divinity of his mission by appealing to the senses of mankind: so that if transubstantiation be true, the whole Christian revelation may be false. No one would impute such a kind of proceeding to any man who was not a professed juggler: and yet such a proceeding is imputed to God, by popes, councils, and the whole tribe of your divines. But it is time I should leave a subject that gives me horror, even when I write against it; and that has been exhausted by abler pens, by that of Tillotson particularly, in a short tract preferable to immense volumes. It is time I should remember that my business here is not to refute

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the doctrine of transubstantiation, but to show how it came to be established, and the political view of the popes in the establishment of it.

SECTION XL.

To this purpose, then, I say, that a supposed mystery in the elements arose first, like a supposed mystery in the effects of the eucharisty, from figurative expression. There is no one, perhaps, in the whole gospel, less liable to an equivocal sense than that which Christ employed, when he said, "this is my body, and this is my blood," in the very act of giving bread and wine to his disciples who were at supper with him, just before his death, for a remembrance of which this ceremony of a supper was then instituted by him. The figure was easy, the application natural, and they could not understand the expression literally. It is impossible to suppose that they did, unless we suppose them mad: and yet it is this very expression that has been made the foundation of a doctrine, which Hurons and Iroquois, Samojeds and Hottentots, would blush to own, and which has brought disgrace on Christianity, if any ever did, as well as innumerable calamities on the Christian world. The fathers of the church loved figurative style, and their whole theology is nothing else, but they employed it more to perplex than to explain: and it is not wonderful, therefore, if they seemed to confound the typical, or symbolical, with the real body of Christ. They seemed to do it, or they did it, if you will, sometimes. But when their matter led them to speak with more caution and precision, so many of them, and of the greatest of them, contradistinguished the first from the last, in such plain and strong terms, that it is evident a real corporeal presence in the eucharisty was neither their opinion, nor the general belief of the church in the first ages. Give me leave to add, though I cite no other particular passages here, because they have been cited by many on the same occasion, that the inconsistency of your church never appears to me more barefaced than it does, when I consider that she has made the writings of St. Austin almost a rule of faith; and yet that this father not only declares, in many places, against her favorite doctrine, which was not at that time a doctrine,* but guards against it, for fear it should become such by a wrong intrepretation of the Scripture. He brings an example of wrong interpretations that may be made, by quoting these words, "except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye

* De Doct. Christiana, l. 3.

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have no life in you." These words interpreted literally contain, according to him, a great impiety. They are to be interpreted, therefore, figuratively. The doctrine of transubstantiation is, therefore, an impious doctrine, according to this father.

But how carefully soever the typical and symbolical body of Christ in the eucharist was distinguished, on some occasions, from his real body, from the body born of the Virgin Mary, which was crucified, which rose from the dead, and which ascended into heaven, they grew to be easily confounded in the minds of men, by the continual use of the same figure without the same explanation of it, and the sign passed for the thing signified among many. This has often happened; and it happened the more naturally in this case, because the imaginations of men being heated with mystery, the doctrine that was the most mysterious was the most likely to prevail. The doctrine, however, of Christ's corporeal presence in the sacrament would not have prevailed, even in the eighth century, very probably, so far as to be established by the authority of a council, if it had not been found necessary to evade an argument, that the breakers of images urged, and to support the stupid worship of them, as Tillotson observes. One synod, that of Constantinople, determined, that Christ had left an image of his body, the bread in the eucharist, and therefore no other image of him ought to be made. Another synod, the second Nicæan, determined, about thirty years afterwards, that the bread and wine after consecration were the body and blood, not the images of the body and blood of Christ; that he had, therefore, left no image of himself, and that other images of him might be worshipped. Zeal for idolatry of one kind propagated idolatry of another: and to the worship of images, which the Christians practised as well as the heathens, and which the heathens excused as well as the Christians, the latter added something too absurd, and too abominable, to make a part of the religious rites of the former. They conjured their God into a wafer; they adored him in that wafer; they offered him up in a true sacrifice to himself, and they eat him up, to conclude the ceremony. "Sit anima mea cum philosophis, non cum Christianis, gente stolidissima, qui Deum faciunt et comedunt;" a saying of Averröes, which no man needs to disown.

All this was not established, without great contest, nor soon. In the ninth and following centuries it was much opposed. One of those who opposed it, Berenger, dean of Angers, and a man famous for learning and piety when there was little of either among the religious society, had been frightened into a recantation, which he recanted as soon as he got out of the papal hands. It is the less wonderful that he should do so; since the pope and

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his council appeared to have no very clear notion of their own doctrine, but blundered miserably when they defined it, in contradiction to that which he had taught; and since Gregory the Seventh found it necessary, a few years afterwards, to define over again the pretended orthodox doctrine of the real corporeal presence. He left out of his definition the circumstances of handling and breaking, of grinding and bruising this body between the teeth of the faithful, as I believe, because they were too shocking to stand in it, and might be insinuated with more advantage when the general doctrine had got prejudice on its side. They have been so, they are avowed parts of it, and this is the doctrine which was declared orthodox eleven hundred years after Christ in the Latin church, under the ridiculous name of transubstantiation, a ridiculous name indeed, and that bears more analogy to chemistry than to theology. What Hildebrand defined, his successors maintained; and Innocent the Third, who was a pope of the same spirit, procured a most solemn confirmation of it in the numerous council of Lateran, which he held at the beginning of the thirteenth century, and in which so many other things were done to advance his own tyranny, and the superiority of the religious over the civil society. The folly of the holy war was renewed, books of decretals were published and authorised, auricular confession was introduced, the cup was taken from the laity; in short, ecclesiastical pride and policy being now come to their height, the whole system of religion became more than ever a system of usurpation; and ambition improved, to her purposes, all that superstition and ignorance could be made to adopt. It will be no breach of charity, therefore, to affirm, that though the doctrine of Christ's real and corporeal presence in the sacrament owed its first rise to the abuse of figurative style, and to the disputes of divines on another subject, yet the solemn definition of transubstantiation was one of those artifices that the popes employed to raise a high opinion of the dignity and power of the priesthood. No popes had ever more reason to raise such an opinion than Gregory the Seventh and Innocent the Third; for none ever achieved nor undertook such conquests as these two made at the head of the church over the civil power, both of them in Germany, and the last of them in our island likewise.

We may say the better, that this artifice was contrived for the purpose I suppose, since the prerogative and power of making God himself is not only ascribed, by the writers of your church, to every priest, but an argument is drawn from thence to show how much reverence ought to be paid to an order of men, the least of whom has a prerogative and power of which the greatest earthly potentates cannot boast. But however this artifice was

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contrived and conducted, how impudently soever popes and councils imposed, for an article of faith, what it is more impious to believe than it would be to disbelieve the whole creed, and however civil and ecclesiastical power united to enforce it, with all the fury of inquisitions, it never could gain, from the eleventh to the sixteenth century, in which it was rejected with a just abhorrence by whole nations, a full and quiet possession of the minds of men in any country; no not in Italy; no not at Rome. They who had not the front to defend this monstrous doctrine, and yet would not separate from the church of Rome, had recourse to the sole expedient that remained. Far from defending it, far from maintaining it as an original article of Christain faith, they chose to put the decision on another point. Many of the most learned and orthodox, long before Luther and Calvin arose, had declared, that men were at liberty to believe, or not to believe, the manner of Christ's presence in the sacrament to be corporeal and by transubstantiation; but the popish doctors insisted, that this liberty subsisted no longer, since the church had defined the particular manner of this presence, in the council of Lateran. Thus they tried to change the state of the question, to deliver themselves from the cruel necessity of justifying blasphemy, and demonstrating contradictions, and to decide the merits of a cause that could not be maintained by those of another that they thought might be so. In this, however, they were deceived, and instead of supporting transubstantiation by the authority of the church, they shook the authority of the church by employing it to this purpose, more than by all the other unworthy purposes to which it had been often prostituted. It was impossible to persuade men, that the church had any right to make new articles of faith, and of such a nature as this was especially, under the pretence of declaring those which the Scriptures had imposed on Christians; and since it was impossible to persuade, the same violence was used to force this article into general profession, that was employed in the case of Arianism. Nay, more blood has been shed, and the calamities brought on the world by these contests have been of longer duration than the others. They are not yet at an end.

SECTION XLI.

What has been said in this essay, and nothing has been said which may not be easily justified, is sufficient to show, that none of the institutions contrived to preserve or restore peace among Christians have had this effect even from the first. Those that the apostles made, concerning which, though men

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talk much they know little, had it not. If the dissensions of Christian congregations were such as did not break out the eyes of the heathens, all was strife and contention within: and the state of Christianity continued the same during those ages, when the government of the church had first a great mixture of democracy in it, and when it grew up afterwards into a more aristocratical form. The evils strengthened under these forms, and grew quite intolerable under the monarchical. Under that government it became tyranny, and the whole system of Christianity, which has been always making, and is not yet made uniform, became such a system of avarice and ambition carried on by fraud and violence in their turns, that new abuses being still accumulated on old, it might have been disputed, whether Christian flocks would not have fed themselves better without any pastors at all, and whether the peace of the world would not have been provided for better without any religion at all. It may be asked now, and I expect you should ask, in what particulars the state of Christianity has been mended to the honor of religion and to the good of mankind, since the last expedient designed for these purposes was laid aside by multitudes, and the pope was no longer the spiritual monarch of Christians, nor the centre of their union? This question is reasonable: and I will answer it very sincerely.

I think then, that the state of Christianity has been mended to the honor of religion and to the good of mankind, in some particulars, not in all: and that even they who remain in the papal communion have, in this respect, some obligation to those who have separated themselves from it. That so many nations withdrew in the sixteenth century from their subjection to the mock sovereignty and real tyranny of the pope has been to the honor of religion surely; since the whole body of Christians is no longer obliged to acknowledge for vicar of Christ every man, however unworthy his character may be, whom the most corrupt college on earth elects to that imaginary dignity, by a supposed inspiration of the Holy Ghost. It has been to the good of mankind surely, that the independence of the church on the state is taken away, in those countries that have renounced all allegiance to the powerful abettor of it, the pope; and that it is extremely reduced in those that profess to hold the same allegiance still. It has been surely for the good of mankind, and for the honor of Christianity, to show the world, that the law of God is immutable, like the author of it, and that orders, disciplines, rites, ceremonies, and acts of external devotion, means invented by men to maintain and propagate this law, are not only mutable in their nature, but necessary to be altered, on some occasions, in the course of human affairs. It was the

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more fit surely to convince men of these truths, since they had been led hoodwinked so long by the knavery of the religious society, that they began to think there was nothing immutable in religion so much as the means employed to support it, nor so little as the end. The wealth and grandeur of the country, and the superstition of the laity had been for more than fourteen hundred years the principal of these immutable means; and the experience of so long time had shown, that the means destroyed the end. They gave occasion to all that mischief which atheistical persons are so ready to impute to religion itself. Without these, disputes concerning doctrines of mere speculation would have made less noise and disturbance in the world, and enterprises of ambition could not have been supported as they have been. To diminish all these, therefore, and to remove an authority which often has, and always may stand in competition with the supreme authority of every society, are the first steps necessary to establish true religion, good government, and public tranquillity.

As these steps were necessary, so they were just; for the wealth and grandeur of the church had been the free gift of the state originally, and they might be resumed, therefore, whenever they became hurtful, or even unnecessary, with as much justice and better policy than they were given. As to the other means, ignorance and superstition, though every thing necessary to constitute them was promoted, they were not directly avowed like the others. To pretend that the church has a right to the former by compact, or by virtue of any alliance with the state, would be to say whatever comes uppermost in a whimsical head. To pretend that the right to them is divine, may be ranked among a great number of absurd propositions, that are affirmed without proof: and bold affirmation had succeeded so well in this case, that he who had asked for any other proof, than the authority of those who affirmed it, would have passed for absurd himself.

Again. Nothing can contribute more to the honor and advancement of Christianity, than to reduce the preachers of it, as near as possible, to the terms of their original institution. Christ gave his apostles a commission to preach and to baptise. to convert men by the miracles they wrought, and to edify and build up in the faith such as they converted. It does not appear that they or their immediate successors, exceeded the bounds of this commission. This was their sole employment. The sole wealth they enjoyed, or claimed, was a voluntary contribution for their maintenance, in the churches which they visited, or wherein they resided: and how moderate this stipend was, may be collected from the practice of St. Paul, who took nothing

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from the Corinthians, but lived on what he earned by his trade. The sole power they enjoyed, or claimed, was that of reproving, and of delivering over to Satan, with the concurrence of the faithful, and not otherwise, such Christians as held false doctrines, or were guilty of enormous crimes. If any pious soul had foreseen, whilst Christianity was the religion of a despised and persecuted sect, that it would be the religion of the empire, that emperors and empresses, kings and queens, would be raised up to God to be the nursing fathers and mothers of his church, we may assure ourselves that great expectations of preserving the faith pure and undefiled under such patronages, and of infusing universally the true spirit of Christianity after such examples, would have been raised. But all the expectations of this pious soul would have been disappointed, as soon as the event happened; for then, on the contrary, the church got, but religion lost; the church was decorated, but religion was disgraced; the cause of one, and the cause of the other, was never more united in opinion, nor so distinct in reality. The nature of that revolution which Constantine made in the religion of the empire, and the place which this body of men had held in the Christian church whilst Christianity was the profession of a sect, enabled them to take the lead, and to be the principal agents in it. Thus they fixed themselves at the head of the new establishment. Religion was made subservient to all their purposes, and the wealth and grandeur of the hierarchy were the principal objects of it. They were principal objects always, they were the sole objects at last: and during several ages that preceded immediately the reformation, the whole system of Christianity, in our western world, was nothing better than a system of ecclesiastical fraud, working by superstition and on it, under the direction of the bishops of Rome. Many saw this: all who saw it, and were not gainers by the iniquity lamented it. Was it not time to make use of the first opportunity, which a favorable conjuncture offered, to assert the rights of the civil against the usurpations of the religious society? This was done in the sixteenth century. It had been attempted before: but the attempts had been vain, and even now they were various; for as ecclesiastics had taken the lead in establishing, they took it in reforming Christianity. They preserved much of their dignity, wealth, and authority in our church; less in that of Luther: less of the latter, in pretension and appearance at least, and none of the two former, in that of Calvin. The constitution of our church seems adapted to that of a great monarchy. The constitution of the Lutheran to those of the little princes and states of Germany. The constitution of Calvin's to the government of a little and poor republic. But popery was renounced in all, the

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superstitions of it were abolished, and that spiritual tyrant was suffered no longer to encroach on civil sovereignty, nor to drain the wealth of these reformed nations into his coffers.

Another instance wherein the Reformation has mended the state of Christianity, to the honor of religion, and to the good of mankind, is this. Christianity retained its name, as factions often do when they have abandoned the principles that gained them reputation, or have perverted the best to the worst purposes, because the church of Rome professed to believe Christ to have been the Son of God, the Messiah, the Redeemer: but then, human authority had so controlled divine in the course of many ages, and had been blended with it so indiscriminately to the observation of men who were forbid to consult one, and were taught the duty of being implicit to the other, that this religion was no longer to be found in the gospel, but in the canons of councils, the opinions of fathers, and the decrees of popes; authorities that must be contemptible in the eyes of every one who knows what councils, fathers, and popes have been, and who knows besides, that many of these canons, opinions, and decrees are either fictitious or corrupted. The first preachers of Christianity could not have known it again. Many articles of faith must have appeared to them new; they would not have acknowledged many precepts to be evangelical, nor many institutions and ceremonies to be apostolical. They would have occasion often to say, much what Socrates said when he heard the Lysis of Plato read. In a word, and to finish up the picture, neither Peter nor Paul would have known how to administer even the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, unless they had gone first to some seminary of priests for instruction. Now this new-fangled religion the Reformation purged; tried it chiefly by the only true criterion of orthodoxy, the gospel, and brought it much nearer to the plainness and simplicity of that which Christ instituted.*

* I say in the text, much nearer to the plainness and simplicity of the gospel of Christ; because it would not be true to say, entirely. All the reformed churches renounced their subjection to that of Rome, and asserted their independence. But some of them retained enough of her institutions, customs, and policy, to show that they had been once members of that body. The churches who valued themselves for going the farthest, and who thought that they could never go too far, in opposition to that of Rome, Calvinists abroad, and their disciples, our Puritans at home, threw off at once, with the outward pomp of the ecclesiastical order, even the decency of forms in the public worship. But then they assumed as great a license in the interpretation of Scripture, as ever had been taken, and exercised as real an ecclesiastical tyranny, under another discipline, as the Roman clergy had ever exercised. By affecting to deduce their reformation from the most early times, when gifts of the spirit were supposed to be common, they ran into enthusiasm; and genuine

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The honor of his religion, so altered, so abused, and so defaced, required certainly that it should be stripped of many rites, ceremonies, and customs which savored too strongly of heathenism and Judaism, or which had been invented manifestly with no other intention than that of multiplying superstitions, which helped to impose on the people, and were lucrative to the priests. The worship of images was of this number. A worship evidently derived from the heathens, as idolatrous among the vulgar, and not more easily distinguished out of idolatry by the

Christianity took as many forms as whimsical teachers could invent. Our English reformers pursued a middle course. They retained much more of the hierarchical order; and when they had rejected many of those superstitious rites and ceremonies, which Vigilantius, a pious and learned Spaniard, had censured, and which Jerom, an impudent and scurrilous Hungarian,* had defended a thousand years before, with all the ferocity of a modern Hussar, they thought it proper to go no farther, or very little farther, in this part of reformation, and fell, I think, into a great absurdity in another. In that, I mean, which concerns the doctrines of artificial theology grafted on Christianity by this very Jerom, and by the other fathers who went before him, as well as by those who followed after him, some in the third, others in the fourth and fifth centuries, when that art of enslaving mankind with words, to use an expression of my Lord Bacon, was established: and when that, which this great man applies to philosophical knowledge, might be said truly of theological, that it became "an undigested heap and collection of much faith and accident, mixed with an abundance of childish notions imbibed in youth."

If we consider what motives our reformers, who boasted of restoring the purity of Christianity, could have to keep open those springs whence so much of the impurity of that church, whose communion they renounced, had been derived; we shall find, I think, that they were two; ancient prejudices, and future hopes. They were averse to unlearn what they had been learning all their lives; and they were desirous to retain that pre-eminence, authority, and wealth, which they had enjoyed under the pope, and hoped to enjoy under the king. The church of Rome acts consistently, when she maintains a veneration for the primitive fathers, who maintained the divine institution of an ecclesiastical order, and who invented so much superstitious worship, and so many sham miracles, to establish a sham Christianity. But what could Protestants mean to maintain the authority of these ancient fathers, if they had not all the same purposes to serve? Let us acknowledge the truth. They had them not in the whole, but they had them in part: and for this reason they found it necessary to preserve the credit of fathers and councils, in part, at least, and as far, as they wanted their authority. When they wanted it no longer, or when it turned against them, they laid it aside most prudently. They built up a new church, or modelled an old one, on principles, however inconsistent, that reconciled, in good measure, the ecclesiastical to the civil policy of their age and country: and they, who thought that an hierarchy and a monarchy were necessary to support one another, which was the prevalent opinion of those times, could not have desired a more reasonable institution, than that which our English reformers made, under the direction, and by the authority of the civil power.

* N. B. Erasmus would make Jerom almost an Italian, because Stridon, the place of his birth, was not far from Italy. But he may be reckoned more properly a Hungarian; since this place was on the very confines of Hungary and Dalmatia.

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learned men of new, than of old Rome. Such again was the use of holy water, which your divines choose to derive from the water of purification in use among the Jews, and which might be derived as truly, perhaps, from the lustral water in use among the heathens. Such again were the consecration of altars, the celebration of jubilees, and other external observances, which had been so avowedly taken from the ceremonial law of the Jews, that your writers do not scruple to justify them by passages of the Pentateuch. In fine, and to quote an instance or two of the second sort; such was the invention of purgatory, and of all the costly means to be delivered from it. Such was the abuse they made even of transubstantiation, which is so great an abuse in itself that one would hardly think it could be abused by any additional circumstances, when it was established not only that priests could make God at any time, but that they might carry him about in a little box, wherever his presence was deemed necessary for public show, or private devotion.

As the reformation exploded the doctrines relative to these and other superstitious practices, so would it have been much to the good of mankind, as well as to the honor of Christianity, if silence on several others, which cause great dissension, had been imposed at the same time. But the contrary happened. The reformed fell out among themselves, and pursued one another with so much bitterness, that they gave no small color to the pretended catholics, to object to them that they multiplied schisms, broke the bands of Christian charity, and disturbed the peace of the Christian world, which was better preserved in the communion of Rome. I do not mean to speak here of the disputes that arose among the reformed about religious ceremonies and church government, which were easy enough to be determined, or indifferent enough to be compounded, in their nature; how hard soever, or how important soever ecclesiastical obstinacy and the spirit of party made them appear. I mean to speak of those disputes that are in their nature not determinable; because there neither is, nor can be, any real determination of ideas about them: disputes that would be little thought of, or could do little hurt, if they remained undecided, and have done so much by dogmatical and contrary decisions. I might instance in several, in that of justification particularly, and of the doctrines dependent on it, concerning all which so much unintelligible jargon has been vainly employed by popish and protestant divines, and to as little purpose by the council of Trent. But I choose rather to instance in the case of the Lord's supper. Of this we have spoken already, and it will serve better than any case less known, to show in what manner the reformers raised new disputes, left their followers exposed to all the mischief which theological

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questions have brought on the world, and the atheistical objection as much in force as it was before the reformation they made.

They were not content, then, to have rendered transubstantiation as ridiculous and odious as it deserves to be esteemed: they went about to explain, each in his own way, this supposed or real mystery. They who believed there was no mystery in the eucharist itself, how mysterious soever the occasion of this institution and the spiritual effects of it might be, should have talked, I think, of the bread as bread, and of the wine as wine, which Christians ate and drank in their communion to commemorate, by this ceremony, the death of Christ, and the redemption of mankind. They who believed there was a mystery in the eucharist itself, and that the bread and wine were, after thanksgiving or consecration, something more than bread and wine, nor barely signs or symbols of the body and blood of Christ, should have avoided all definitions, instead of opposing definition to definition, and making that a mystery which Christ had not made so. But they proceeded in a manner very different. They all acknowledged, if Zwinglius did, that the body and blood of Christ were truly received in this sacrament, as the landgrave of Hesse declared to Granvelle and others in a solemn conference at Spire:* and by this acknowledgment they put themselves under inextricable difficulties. Luther taught that the body and blood of Christ were really in the elements of bread and wine, by a consubstantiation, which was said to last, if I mistake not, during the manducation only. Did the Calvinists talk a whit more intelligibly when they professed at the famous conference at Poissy, "that in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, Christ gives, presents, and exhibits to us really the substance of his body and blood: that by faith we receive, really and in fact, the true and natural body and blood of Christ, by virtue of the Holy Ghost?"† What did Beza mean when he talked of eating with the mouth of faith? He must mean that he believed that he ate, or he must mean nothing? Now what did he believe, that he ate in the same sacrament? Not the symbolical body of Christ; for he affirmed that he ate the true and natural body: not the true and natural body of Christ; for he affirmed that to be in heaven and no where else. What then did he believe that he ate, or what other sense can be put on those words, "eating with the mouth of faith," and those "receiving by faith," than that of believing he ate, and believing he received? His adversaries held a great impiety, but they held it consistently. According to them, the body of Christ was in the

* Vide Sleidan, l. 17. † Aubigny, Hist. Univers. l. 2.

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sacrament by the charm of consecration, and they ate it when they ate the sacramental bread. According to Beza and his colleagues, the body of Christ was not there but in heaven, and yet they ate it too, really and in fact. This conference broke up abruptly. The fools on one side accused the protestants of blaspheming when they deny transubstantiation, just as the heathen reputed those philosophers atheists who were not polytheists. The fools on the other remained convinced that they ate, spiritually and with the mouth of faith, in this sacrament, a bodily substance that was not there; whilst they ate most corporeally a bodily substance, the bread, that was there. Both went away resolved to cut the throats of one another: and such are the effects of theology, that is, of human authority in matters of religion.

This authority has imposed chiefly, when it has imposed, on the minds of men, by the abuse of words. This abuse of words makes the sum of metaphysics and theology, imaginary sciences, removed from the control, as from the assistance, of sense, conversant about hypothetical natures, and about ideas vastly complicated and perplexed. Such theology tinctured all the philosophy of Plato. Logic all that of Aristotle. These two schools were the great mints of insignificant terms; and though Zeno, who did little else than invent new words, and change the application of old, opened another mint of the same kind, yet the coin of the two former has been alone current. The immaterial forms, the eternal ideas, and all the incorporeal essences of Plato, for instance, were given and received in every philosophical payment, like the substantial forms, the intentional species, or the entelechy of Aristotle, till very lately.

I have often thought that nothing could have happened more fortunately for the propagation of learned ignorance, than the succession of the Peripatetic to the Platonic philosophy; for though Aristotle opposed many opinions of his master, yet the subtilty of his logic has served to cover both his master's errors and his own, on more occasions, and at more periods, than one. No writings, certainly, were ever so mad as those of the latter Platonists, which contain the very quintessence of enthusiasm, and which are almost one perpetual abuse of reason and language. Many of the Christian fathers came out of the same schools; and all of them using the same delirious style, it became that of Christian theology. We must not imagine however, that the philosophy of Aristotle had no share in framing the system of this theology, though that of Plato had the greatest and the earliest. It is true, that the original works of the former were unknown in the Western church, till the fifteenth century, when Greek learning was brought into Italy by those who fled thither

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after the taking of Constantinople. But still Aristotle was at that time rather ill known than unknown; for in the very beginning of the thirteenth a Latin translation had been made, by the direction of the emperor Frederick the Second, of some parts of his writings from the Arabic version of them: and other fragments had appeared in the same language, such as might be expected, in those ages of ignorance, from men, among whom the Latin and Greek were become very barbarous languages; who understood ill the purity of one, and were little able to explain themselves properly and clearly in the other. If we go higher up, we find Aristotle much better known. He must have been so even by the first of the Greek fathers, and his reputation must have been great during all those ages wherein so many of the cornerstones of Christian theology were laid; since he had commentators, themselves philosophers of great fame, among the Greeks, in the second, the third, the fourth, and the fifth centuries, Alexander Aphrodisæus, Themistius, and others. No doubt can be made of this; and if any doubt could be made, those nice distinctions, and that perpetual torture of words, for which fathers and councils were so famous, would be sufficient to prove it. They learned of Plato to talk without any meaning: and they learned, I think, of Aristotle, to seem sometimes to have one.

The logical empire of Aristotle, and the abuse of words grew up with Christian theology; but they were never absolutely confirmed till ignorance prevailed alike in the East and the West, from the ninth to the fifteenth century, when the first dawnings of knowledge began to appear, and men began to see their way in the farther acquisition of it. It may seem strange, but it is true, that the schools which were erected, and the encouragement which was given to learning from the days of Charles the Great, served only to keep men out of the way of true knowledge, and to impose a false appearance of it. The popes had procured chiefly the foundations of these schools: and the encouragement to the scholars had been derived from them, or through their means. I might have reckoned this among the artifices they employed to carry on their usurpations. Bare ignorance alone was not sufficient to their purpose. It was necessary to promote learned ignorance, and to establish error, with all the circumstances of authority and reverence; lest even the ignorant should stumble upon truth. To keep men from the search of it, they were told, that truth, and divine truths especially, were hard to find; that persons, on whose ability they might depend, were set apart, therefore, to save others the trouble of this search, and that their holy mother, the church, watched over all. Thus revelation and reason both were made the monopoly of the clergy.

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They doled out the former in such scraps, and under such interpretations, as they thought fit. They employed the latter, not to analyse, not to verify ideas, in order to compare them, but to take such as have been mentioned above, as it were on trust, like the vile instruments of error: the instruments of error indeed, since, how well soever these comparisons were made, nothing that was true, or complete and adequate, or distinct and clear, could result from them, and nothing, consequently, that deserved the name of knowledge. In short, they profaned and abused the two noblest gifts of God to man, natural reason and supernatural revelation.

Natural philosophy and mathematics made little progress in these schools, experimental philosophy none at all. To turn and to wind the few notions they had a thousand ways, to distinguish imperceptible differences, to refine and subtilise a little real knowledge till it evaporated entirely, and nothing remained but a caput mortuum of words, was their whole business. John of Damascus had brought logic into fashion among the Greek divines, and Böetius among the Latins, long before the institution of these schools, and longer still before their doctors became famous under the name of Scholastics: so that whenever this happened, the same manner of philosophising on logical and metaphysical notions, on technical and insignificant terms, had prevailed in them from their foundation, and had been applied to theology. The men, who applied themselves to it, had some broken and superficial acquaintance with Aristotle at second hand, as we have observed that they might, and even at third hand; for much of it came to them through his Arabian interpreters and commentators: and as in every other science, so in theology, they were servilely attached to his principles and to his method. Some have placed Lanfranc, archbishop of Canterbury, at the head of the Scholastic tribe, in the order of time: and if he wrote against Berenger, in the middle of the eleventh century, we may assure ourselves, that Aristotle's philosophy was employed then as it has been since, to account for Christ's corporeal presence in the sacrament. It has been said, I know, that Peter the Lombard, a famous Scholastic in the next century to Lanfranc, imitated and followed John of Damascus; though Erasmus and others have made a doubt whether he was the author of that work, which procured him the name of master of the sentences. But such criticisms are trifling as well as uncertain: for whether this writer, or his predecessor Lanfranc, imitated John of Damascus or no; and whether Peter the Lombard, or Abelard, compiled the sentences, their theology was that of their age and of these schools, and their method was derived ultimately from Aristotle.

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These schools continued in great fame, and produced in every age, during the course of many, a multitude of writers, some of whom were men of such extraordinary genius, that they might have enlightened, like so many suns, the orb of learning, and have carried human knowledge to the utmost bounds of human capacity. But instead of this, they served, like so many ignes fatui, to lead men backwards and forwards through the briars and thorns of vain speculations, within the narrow bounds that Aristotle set, as if truth was not to be found out of these. They checked the growth of true philosophy, by bringing into it no new materials from nature, and they corrupted true religion, by blending their philosophical speculations, and the vain subtilties of their logic, with divine truths. They thought that Aristotle had left a most complete and perfect system of philosophy. But they seemed to think, that Christ had left an incomplete and imperfect system of religion. To supply these defects, they made summaries of Christian theology, to say nothing of sentences of the fathers and tedious commentaries on them,* of commentaries on the Bible, of theological questions and cases of conscience, that are much larger than all the Scriptures canonical and apocryphal, and in comparison of which the gospels, nay the whole New Testament is but a pocket-book; though the pocket-book ought to contain every one of these folios, and none of them are excusable for containing more than the pocket-book. I have touched so often already the absurdity, and, as I think, the iniquity of seeking Christianity out of the gospel, of making any criterion of natural religion but the works, or any criterion of revealed religion but the word of God, that I should say nothing here concerning the last, if I had not often found an answer to it insisted on with a silly air of triumph, by dogmatical persons in their conversation, and in writing. What do you complain of? say these persons. Is not the system of Christianity in the same case with every other system of laws particularly? Yes; and that is the very thing I complain of. A system of human law and human policy is the product of human understanding, and therefore incomplete and imperfect, liable to different constructions at all times, and fit to be altered at some. But this cannot be said, without blasphemy, of the Christian dispensation; though it has been muttered by some divines, and has been strongly implied by the whole conduct of the Christian church. What is made by man may be explained, supplied, altered, and improved by man. But has the word of God, spoken to all mankind, need to be explained by any man, or by any order of men, who have

* N. B.—The exposition of St. Matthew's Gospel takes up, I think, ninety homilies, and that of St. John eighty-seven, in the works of Chrysostom.

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as little pretence to be thought inspired, as those who are not of their order? Can any human authority supply, or alter, and much less improve, what the Son of God, God himself, came on earth to reveal? Again, is there no difference between my being led into error by human authority, which I know to be human, and by human authority, which I take to be divine? To take the laws of God for the laws of man, is impious. But is it less so, to impose the laws of man for the laws of God? Surely it is much more so: as one may be impiety without design, and the other must be premeditated.

It is notorious, that many great points of Christian faith and doctrine were first taught, or first determined, several ages after the immediate disciples of Christ were dead, on the authority of tradition alone, till there was a canon of Scriptures; and on tradition and them, when there was one. The trinity, the coeternity, the coequality, in a word the sameness of the Son with the Father, the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son, the fires of purgatory, and the real corporeal presence of Christ in the eucharist, to mention no more, were of this number. It was lawful to dispute about them all, till the church had decided. Nay Erasmus* is so indulgent as to doubt if it was heretical in Origen, to make a question whether "the Son and the Holy Ghost are of the same divine essence with the Father, or whether they are only creatures more excellent than all other creatures." After the church, that is, certain assemblies of ecclesiastics, had decided and decreed, "post evulgatam ecclesiæ sententiam," it was lawful to doubt no longer, nor to dispute about any of these points, "ambigere fas non est." They were become articles of faith. They were made such then, by these decisions and decrees. They were made such then, by human authority. Not at all, says Erasmus, or any other divine. They were made such by the Scriptures. Whatever is not agreeable to them, is not of Christ;† and therefore false interpretations of the Scriptures are to be rectified by such as are true.‡ Now those which the church makes are true: and it is enough for you and such as you are, to believe firmly all that the church has declared to be necessary.§ Roundly asserted indeed, but very fallaciously argued; for whether the interpretations of the church are true, which is assumed, or whether they are false, which is possible, the doctrines established on them are established on human, not on divine authority. The Scripture is

* Symp. Catech. 4ta.

† Quod aberrat a sacris voluminibus, non est Christi.—Ibid.

‡ Falsa scripturarum interpretatio vera interpretatione refutanda est.—Ibid.

§ Tibi tuique similibus satis est ea constanti tenere fide. quæ pro necessariis exserte et expresse tradidit ecclesia.—Ibid.

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the word of God. The interpretation is the word of man. But besides, I learn from that judicious and orthodox divine Mr. Hooker,* and Erasmus and others of the same tribe speak to the same effect, that all the things necessary to salvation are not necessary to be contained, and set down in plain terms, in the Scriptures. It is sufficient that they be comprehended in such sort, that by reason we may conclude from the Scriptures all things which are necessary; from whence I conclude just as I did before, that the great points spoken of have been established on human, not on divine authority; deduced, collected by reason, or what has been called reason; not expressly taught by revelation.

That these great points of Christian faith and doctrine were not very evidently deduced, nor very accurately collected from the Scriptures, may be presumed from the disputes that have been always, and that still subsist about them. It might be proved too, that Scripture is not so favorable in many cases, nor more so in any one, to these opinions than to those that stand in opposition to them; and that the only advantage which the Athanasians or the Augustinians, for instance, have over the Arians or the semi-pelagians, is not an advantage which the Scripture gives them. They derive it from the suffrages of particular men, whose motives were often not entirely Christian, and from the arbitrary dogmas of fathers and decrees of councils. These opinions, therefore, that are become articles of faith, and that pass for some of the doctrines which Christ taught, though they are nothing more than inventions of fathers improved by schoolmen, may be quoted as so many particular instances of theological presumption, and, I think, impiety.† But call it

* Ec. Pol. lib. i.

† There have been some divines a little more modest than others, since there are some, I think, who have seemed ashamed of their artificial theology, and have endeavored to excuse, rather than defend the fathers of their church. The fathers, it has been said, taught the doctrines of Christianity in their genuine purity, and affected to teach them no otherwise. The heretics forced them to abandon this pious reserve, in order to defeat the designs of these men who attempted daily to introduce errors in opinion and practice. Now if this was their case in general, it may have been such even of St. Paul, who was the father of the fathers; and his gospel may have been written in the same spirit of contradiction and of dispute. But it is impossible to discover, with certainty, on what points, and in what degrees artificial theology gave occasion to heresy, or heresy to artificial theology; though we know, in some measure, what the disputes were, that arose in the Christian church. The doctrines that were termed afterwards orthodox, or heretical, were in their origin, no doubt, coeval, and both grew up together, till one outgrew the other. In general the orthodox fathers had no advantage over the others. If the former had recourse to tradition, so had the latter: and the former were not, certainly, superior to the latter either in learning, or in means of knowledge, or in sanctity of life, great foundations of credibility in such cases as

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which you please, or what you please, the proceeding grew more general and more systematical in the schools that have been mentioned. They did not take this license with particular points of doctrine alone, but with the whole system of Christianity. They melted down the whole mass with all the alloy that had been already added to it by others, and they cast it anew with an immense deal of their own. They made it so voluminous, that it was no longer useful: and Erasmus might well say? "quis possit aquinatis secundæ secundam circumferre?"* They perplexed it with so many bold and indeterminable questions about the divine nature and operations, with so many serious trifles, with so many minute questions about formalities, quidities, and other fantastical notions, that it grew contentious, and more than ever hurtful. In short, they multiplied distinctions and definitions till their manner became as unintelligible as their matter: and my Lord Bacon might have added scholastic theology to the sciences that sway the imagination more than the reason, such as astrology, natural magic, and alchemy. If the first pretends to discover the influence of superior or inferior bodies, this theology pretended to discover the influence of superior on inferior spirits, by illuminations, inspirations and the internal action of grace. If the second pretends to reduce natural philosophy from speculation to works, this theology pretended to deduce the duties of man from speculations concerning the moral attributes of God, and to instruct him in the imitation of God. If the third pretends to separate dissimilar, and to throw out heterogeneous parts of bodies, to cleanse such as are impure, and to perfect such as are immature, this theology pretended to perform much the same operations on ideas, notions, terms. These the professors of it confounded, and distinguished, at their pleasure, and like chemists or apothecaries made new out of old, old out of new, one out of many, and many out of one.† Nay this comparison may be carried farther. The scholastic divines rendered

these. Arius, for instance, or Nestorius, to mention no more, were in all these respects at least equal to Athanasius or Cyril: and whoever examines the partial accounts of one side alone, for we have none of the other, of all that passed in the disputes that arose whether the Son was consubstantial with the Father, and whether the Virgin Mary was properly the mother of God, will find great reason to believe, that the two heretics were not the least respectable doctors of the four. Thus we shall be apt to think, if we consult not only ancient memorials, but the writings of modern divines, and suffer ourselves neither to be amused by arbitrary epithets, and vague declamations, in which the modern imitate the ancient fathers, nor to be perplexed by sophistical arguments, in which they sometimes imitate the schoolmen.

* Ep. 329.

† ———Pharmacopolarum ritu, ex novis vetera, ex veteribus nova, è pluribus unum, ex uno plura subinde fingentium et refingentium.—Eras. ibid.

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their art, for such it was, rather than a science, as incomprehensible as they could, that they might make a greater profit, and acquire a greater reputation by it, among the ignorant.

In this manner, and by the help of these schools, a theological system, which had no intention to promote the true and holy purposes of Christianity, was imposed on an ignorant and superstitious world, for the very religion which Christ had instituted, and his disciples had propagated. The sole intention, and the sole effect of it was to establish an ecclesiastical empire under that spiritual monarch, the pope, and his spiritual ministers, the clergy. This was the effect of that supposed alliance between the church and the state. An effect so natural, that he who pleads for any right in a church, or ecclesiastical order, independent on the state, may be justly supposed to mean this effect in some degree, and under some form or other. The first foundations of this empire were laid in private, the second only in public conscience. To secure this empire, therefore, it was necessary to keep the first entirely and exclusively in the hands of the pope and the clergy, and whatever influence the civil power might, on some occasions, gain over the latter, to take effectual care that it should never be able to gain any over the former. Now nothing either did or could contribute more to this great principle of policy than the conduct of these schools. By wrapping up both natural and revealed religion in the obscurity of metaphysics and of logic, they made themselves the sole judges of both. By sending abroad their disciples, under the characters of confessors, directors, casuists, inquisitors, preachers, they had sure means of exercising their judgments, instilling what opinions, and raising what passions, the permanent and occasional, the immediate or remote interests of the church required. The first duty of the religion these doctors propagated was to believe what the church believed; and what the church believed they alone had a right to declare. The second duty of this religion was to observe all the ceremonies, and to perform all the external acts of devotion and worship, that the church had instituted, or should institute. The third and least was the practice of morality. On the first there was no mitigation nor indulgence. Men were to believe implicitly, or to be treated as enemies to God and to his church in this world, and to be damned eternally in the other. On the second and the third much indulgence was shown. It was even profuse on the third. Compositions with the church might be made on both, on the breach of her own laws, and on the breach of those of God and nature; and these compositions were so often pecuniary, especially on the breach of the last, that whilst the church was enriched, no layman, who had money enough to save his soul,

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could be damned. But there was something still more favorable to vice in the last case. The duties which the church exacted were so particular, that they could not, and they cost so little to perform, that they did not deserve to be explained away. But the duties of morality were more general, and more liable, by variety of circumstances, to different modifications, in the application of them, as they were much harder to be observed strictly amidst the infirmities of human nature. Casuists therefore interposed. They lightened the burden in favor of these infirmities, by all the definitions, distinctions, and exceptions that logic could furnish. They did more. In all cases where the church was concerned, they gave full range to the passions of mankind. Justice was no longer a moral virtue. Faith was not to be kept with heretics. Benevolence or charity were no longer principles of natural or revealed religion. Heretics or excommunicated persons were to be persecuted and exterminated with the most unrelenting fury; and I may defy any man to show instances of greater inhumanity, and more profligate wickedness, committed by the ferocity of lawless savages, or barbarous nations, than I am able to show of those which have been committed, not only under the veil of this spurious Christianity, but on motives taken from it, and at the instigation of those who taught it. By such means, and with such effects as these, was an ecclesiastical empire maintained during several ages, whilst churchmen governed conscience of every kind, and by governing conscience governed the world.

The scholastics had indeed many contests among themselves, that were carried on with great animosity, and broke out sometimes into open violence. Such, for instance, was the dispute between the Thomists and the Scotists about the immaculate conception of the virgin, and that between the Nominalists and the Realists about the nature of universals. How could these disputes, or any other, be determined among men, whose pleasure and whose pride it was to dispute perpetually, and who cultivated an art that was of use to no man in the discernment of truth, but might help the subtile dialectician to pose even the man he could not refute? These disputes, however, were kept among themselves, by the policy, not by the moderation of scholastics certainly: and as long as they neither rent the theological system, nor shook the ecclesiastical empire, the court of Rome tempered, managed, and suffered them, notwithstanding all the scandals they occasioned, in the universities of Oxford and of Paris particularly. But as soon as our Ockham, the invincible doctor, began to maintain that the ecclesiastical jurisdiction ought to be subject to the civil, the Nominalists were reputed heretics, and the Realists alone passed for orthodox. There was as little

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union among these as among the others, and religion might seem to be more nearly concerned in their disputes. But the great purpose, for which all these schools were erected, being the support of the ecclesiastical empire, any doctrines that reduced, or weakened it, were the greatest of heresies. This happened in the fourteenth century, when Wickliff went much farther than Ockham, and laid the ax to the root of a tree, which the popes had watered with so much care and expense, and which bore so much bitter fruit; so that if the impertinent philosophy and profane theology of the schools took their rise in our country from Lanfranc, Ruccline, Swineshead, and Ockham, we may boast that some of the first and greatest advances towards a reformation of both were made by men of our country likewise.

From the time that Ockham had signalised himself in a public dispute at Avignon, in favor of the emperors and the civil power against the popes and the ecclesiastical jurisdiction, the Nominalists were not only more than ever opposed by the other scholastics, the Scotists especially, but so persecuted by the court of Rome, and all the fautors of her usurpations, that their whole doctrine was condemned by Louis the Eleventh in a public edict before the end of the fifteenth century.* The doctors and masters of the university of Paris, for the scholastics too as well as the rabbins, had the title of masters, were obliged to renounce the name with the doctrine of that sect, and all their books were burned according to the laudable precaution of the orthodox. The Realists, on the other side, were recommended, and nothing was neglected on this and every other occasion that might keep these schools firmly attached to a cause, which they had been principal instruments in imposing on the world, for the cause of Christian religion. These efforts, however, proved insufficient. The papal throne was shaken, and ecclesiastical empire was in a visible decline. Scholastic divines had supported it, in the opinion of mankind, as long as they were favored by general ignorance, even greater than their own. But as soon as learning began, to draw towards the beginning of the sixteenth century, these birds of night were forced to fly from day, though they screeched and clapped their wings for a while. It was in vain that modern scholastics prostituted learning as their predecessors had prostituted genius, to maintain the credit of this theology, and the papal authority connected with it. The task was too hard even for the council of Trent, and for all the great men who have undertaken it since. Nothing supports the system now, except general ignorance in some countries, and the force of civil, abetting ecclesiastical,

* Morhof, Polyhis.

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power, on principles of political consideration among those who are not ignorant. Many a man thinks, many such I have known, that the theology of the schools is absurd, that the monarchy of the Pope though reduced, is still impertinent and hurtful, and that the abuses of wealth and power in the church are intolerable. But yet the same man will contend, that it is better to bear than to attempt a reformation of evils that are grown inveterate, and will think that he is strong when he quotes not only the disorders, the wars, and the massacres, which attended and followed the reformation in the sixteenth century but the several ridiculous and mad sects, to the rise of which this reformation gave occasion though the reformers condemned them.

I have heard men of good parts and good intentions reason in this manner; I have heard it said by a very respectable man in the Gallican church, when he excused, rather than defended, submission to the papal power, that this power is the key-stone of that arch whereon the whole Christian system rests, and that the whole building must fall if the key-stone be taken away. I have heard another of the same church, and of the same character, advance, that many things absurd in belief and ridiculous in practice, were necessary to attach the greatest number of men and women, and especially of the vulgar, to Christianity; that men of sense and knowledge ascribed to these doctrines and institutions as little as they deserved, but that men of sense and knowledge ought to consider and distinguish what is for them, and what for the vulgar: that this cannot be done in outward profession, but that every man of sense and knowledge may do it for himself, and should therefore bear with a useful deception. Much may be said in favor of this political reasoning, and much may be said against it. It might have been better perhaps if it had been practicable, to reform, as Erasmus would have done, than as Luther did. I shall not enter into the controversy. But this I say. Such instances as have been given confirm the whole drift of this essay, because they show the mischievous consequences of theology, by which an order of men have been able to usurp on God, if I may use the expression, as well as on man, to propagate their own inventions for his revelations, and to assume an authority, to which they have no right, over all the other orders of society; till the fraud and the usurpation were so established, that it was not possible to reject them without falling into some of these calamities which the establishment of them had cost mankind. A melancholy alternative surely, and yet such a one that the love of truth, the spirit of liberty, and an awful respect for the Supreme

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Being, ought to determine men to take their resolution in it. When Luther and Calvin, and the other reformers, took this resolution it must not be denied that affections and passions and private interests, had their share, as well as the other motives, in determining them to it. Such will be the case in all human enterprises even in the best, and therefore the issues even of the best are always imperfect. Our reformers shook off entirely the papal yoke, they laid aside and exposed many false traditions and unchristian doctrines. But our reformers had some of the prejudices and much of the spirit of the schools, about them: and he* was not in the wrong, perhaps, who made the scholastic chronology begin at Lanfranc and end at Luther; though many of your divines and of ours have talked the same gibberish since and talk it still.

May we not compare the great revolution which happened in the Roman church, to that which happened in the Roman empire? The empire broke to pieces, some of the provinces became distinct states, asserted their independence, and acknowledged no longer the imperial authority, nor the laws of the empire. But in all these new constitutions, there was some tincture of the old, some principles of law, and some of policy, which bore a near resemblance to it. Thus, in the constitutions of our reformed churches, though they were independent on that of Rome, something remained to show that they had been once members of that body, as much as they differed now in doctrine and discipline. The church of Rome shut up the Bible from the laity. The reformed churches opened it, and declared that the pure word of God was the sole test of true religion, and the sole foundation of theirs. That it is the true, the sole, and the sufficient test of Christian religion must be owned; for if it was not it could not be the word of God, nor Christianity the religion of God. But is it certain that this word has been made the sole foundation of our reformed religions? I apprehend it is not. Nay since to speak properly I must say religions, it cannot have been made such. The word of God is one, and one religion alone can be taught by it. If there are different religions raised, there must have been different foundations laid. How are we to account for this? We must acknowledge the truth. Human authority has passed for divine, though not so coercively in our churches as in yours, and the uncertian, variable word of man, for the infallible, invariable word of God. We freed ourselves from spiritual tyranny, and we fell into spiritual anarchy. The change, however, was advantageous; since

* Morhof Polyhis.

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there is, in the nature of things, and has been in this case, a transition, through confusion, into order; whereas there is no immediate transition from established tyranny into a settled state of liberty.

Before the reformation, Christians knew nothing of the Bible more than the church told them. It might, and it might not be a rule to the pastors, but it was none to the flocks. After the reformation it was put into the hands of every one. The pastors appealed to it, and the flocks were supposed to judge for themselves by it. What happened? The very same thing that happened in the primitive church, before any canon of Scripture was made by public authority, and received by common consent. Various traditions and various doctrines of men, who pretended alike to the gifts of the spirit, divided the faithful, and every teacher had his followers. Just so at the reformation, various interpretations of authentic Scriptures, and various comments upon them divided the reformers and the reformed. Every teacher had his followers, and some of these affected to preach as well as pray by the spirit. Ambiguous and obscure expressions in the text had the same effect as no text at all, and modern theology broke the uniformity of religion as much as ancient, caused as much desolation, and spilled as much blood. The reformed churches persecuted one another, and your church persecuted them all. Atheistical persons, therefore, continue to take the pretence which every religion gives them, to confound religion and theology, and to ascribe to the former all the evils that are due to the latter.

It is natural to ask, can nothing be done to remove this scandal by putting an end to these evils? I will presume to answer, nothing; unless men can be prevailed upon to assume the spirit of Christianity as well as the name of Christians, and this will be found, I suppose, impracticable as long as the sole care of religion and the sole direction of conscience is confined everywhere to a distinct order of men, whose distinct interests, and whose passions of course, carry them to keep these dissensions and feuds alive. If they were content to explain what they understand, to adore what they understand not, to leave in mystery all that Christ and his apostles have left so, to a time that is not yet come, and to teach others to content themselves with natural theology, and such revealed theology as this; the evil spoken of would soon cease, and the scandal consequently. If they proceeded in this manner, there would be ample matter left to employ their tongues and their pens, and none to employ the swords and daggers of the rest of mankind. The law of God would be a plain and consistent law, and no color would

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remain for infidels to form this argument. "Either the Scriptures do not contain the law of God, or it was not in the intention of God to promote the peace and happiness of mankind, or he did not proportion the means to his end:" every one of which propositions is blasphemy, and yet, as theology has corrupted genuine Christianity, it will be hard to evade them all.

But since such a change as this may be wished for by good men, rather than expected by any man, it is proper to consider what can be done to lessen an irremediable evil, and whether good policy cannot furnish an antidote against the poison of theology; on which I shall say a word or two before I finish this long essay. There are arguments, no doubt, even of the political kind, and of irresistible force, against atheists who reject all religion, latitudinarians who admit all alike, and rigidists who suffer one alone. If the first prevail, there will be no religious conscience at all; if the second, there will be as many as there are religious sects in every society; if the third persecution for religion will be made a maxim of government, as it is made in some countries, to the bane of society, and to the shame of the Christian profession. Do there remain then no means to prevent the fatal effects of theological disputes, and ecclesiastical quarrels? Some countries are so miserable, by principles of bigotry incorporated with those of their government, and by the establishment of inquisitions, that there remain no such means, but by the total extirpation of all those who differ, or who are suspected to differ, from the established doctrines. In other countries, though a rigid spirit prevails, yet if inquisitions are not established, and if ecclesiastics do not govern, it is very possible by skill and management to allay, for the most part, the ferments which theology is apt to raise in the state, and to blunt the fury of those who call themselves orthodox, and every man who dissents in opinion from them heretical. In countries where this rigid spirit is not that of the government, though dissension cannot be entirely prevented, the bad influence and effects of it may. To make government effectual to all the good purposes of it, there must be a religion; this religion must be national; and this national religion must be maintained in reputation and reverence; all other religions or sects must be kept too low to become the rivals of it. These are in my apprehension first principles of good policy. The establishment of a religious order subject to the civil magistrate, and subservient to the civil power, not that of a religious society pretending to be the allies and aiming to be the masters of the civil, may be reconciled very well to these principles, and sure I am, that they may be pursued, not only without persecution,

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but without the invasion of any one right which men can justly claim under the freest and most equitable government. The parliament of one thousand six hundred and forty-one declared, that human laws cannot bind conscience; which is a declaration every sect makes out of power, and none observe willingly in it. But be it so. Human laws, however, may and ought to exclude those men from power in the state, kings especially, who profess a private conscience repugnant to the public conscience of that state. Such men will make use of power, and the better men they are, the more to propagate their own schemes of religion, to strengthen their own party and to recommend their particular notions about ecclesiastical government, which cannot be done without manifest danger to the public peace. The wisdom of our constitution has therefore joined, admirably well together, the two most compatible things in the world, how incompatible soever they may have been represented, a test and a toleration; and by rejecting alike the principles of latitudinarians and rigidists, has gone far to prevent those evils that gave occasion to the objection of atheists: as I hope that I have done in this essay, to prove, by considering the nature, rise, progress and effects of authority in matters of religion, that theology has been always liable to this objection, Christianity never. Christianity, genuine Christianity is contained in the gospels; it is the word of God; it requires, therefore, our veneration, and a strict conformity to it. Traditional Christianity, or that artificial theology which passes for genuine, and which we all profess, is derived from the writings of fathers and doctors of the church, and from the decrees of councils. It is therefore the word of men, and of men, for the most part, either very weak, very mad, or very knavish. It requires, therefore, no regard, nor any inward conformity to it. You have, I know, at your elbow a very foul-mouthed and a very trifling critic, who will endeavor to impose upon you on this occasion, as he did on a former. He will tell you again, that I contradict myself, and that by going about to destroy the authority of the fathers and the church, which I reject, I go about to destroy the authenticity of the gospels, which I admit. But if the dogmatical pedant should make this objection, be pleased to give him this answer; that I do indeed admit the gospels, not on the testimony of the spirit, like Calvin, but on that of the fathers and doctors of the church, who not only bear this testimony separately; but, assembled in a council at Laodicea, rejecting many other gospels, made a canon of these: and yet that his objection is impertinent, since I may receive the gospels on the credit of these men, of whom I think very little better than I do of him, for authentic Scriptures, just as well as

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he receives the books of the Old Testament, concerning which he has started so many idle paradoxes, for such, on the credit of the Jews, though he rejects their oral law and the fabulous traditions of their rabbins. Thus I shall conclude this long essay, wherein I have recalled the sum of what I have said to you in conversation, and which has, I fear, too much of the loose and wandering air of conversation.

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FRAGMENTS OR MINUTES

OF

ESSAYS.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE foregoing Essays, if they may deserve even that name, and the Fragments or Minutes that follow, were thrown upon paper in Mr. Pope's lifetime, and at his desire. They were all communicated to him in scraps, as they were occasionally written. But the latter not having been connected and put together under different heads, and in the same order as the former had been, before his death, if that may be called order; I have contented myself to correct and extend them a little, and to leave them as Fragments or Minutes, in the form in which they appear, though they might be styled Essays with no more impropriety than those which precede them. They are all nothing more than repetitions of conversations often interrupted, often renewed, and often carried on a little confusedly. The opinions I held are exposed as clearly, as they ought to be by a man who thinks his opinions founded in truth. I thought, and I think still, that mine were so. The more important, therefore, the subjects are, the more necessary it seemed to me not to disguise the truth, especially to friends not easily to be scandalised, even when their own opinions and prejudices were frequently contradicted, and on occasions when freedom of speech could be neither indecent nor hurtful. It could be neither indecent nor hurtful to these friends; nor will it be so, I hope, to those into whose hands these papers may fall after my death.

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I.

I have read again Dr. Cudworth's posthumous treatise concerning eternal and immutable morality, which you sent me long ago: and, since you ask my opinion of it now, I shall take some notice of those, which this very learned author defends on two subjects, the nature of human knowledge, and the principles of natural religion. On the first I have written to you already, and on the last you know that I intend to write to you. On both of these I differ widely from the doctor, and am very far from finding any thing in this treatise, which can induce me, in the least degree to change my way of thinking. On the contrary, the great principle on which he proceeds seems to me of the utmost absurdity, and the consequences deducible from it at least as dangerous, perhaps more so, to the foundation of all religion, than the consequences that flow from the doctrines he opposes.

Cudworth enters into the dispute between Des Cartes and his opposers, who have triumphed exceedingly over him for saying, "I do not think that the essences of things, and those mathematical truths which can be known of them, are independent on God; but I think, however, that they are immutable and eternal, because God willed and ordered that they should be so." It is more probable, and it is more candid to believe, that this philosopher was in earnest, than that he was in jest, when he advanced this proposition. He might think that he took the best, if not the strongest side in dispute, and approve his own intention in the choice he made; as it deserves to be approved by every sincere theist, and modest inquirer into matters of the first philosophy, even by those who are not of his mind.

If Des Cartes was to arise, and to answer for himself, might he not distinguish between immutable and independent? Might he not say, that these truths are immutable, because they affirm what is conformable to that universal nature whereof God is the author, as he is of that intelligence by which they are perceived; and that they are, therefore, in a proper sense, both immutable and dependent? immutable, as much as the nature is to which they belong; dependent, on that Being by whose energy this nature began to exist, and is preserved. He might own himself afraid to assert, notwithstanding the decisions of schoolmen, or the decrees of councils, that there can be any entity whatever, or any thing in any being whatever, which is independent on God. He might lament his own fate, to be accused of atheism, because he em-

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ployed, in physical hypotheses, matter and motion alone; though he always supposed a first mover, and had proved, by a demonstration he thought good, the existence of an all-perfect Being: and to be thus accused by men, who presume to maintain that they have other objects of knowledge, besides the existence of an all-perfect Being, which exist by the necessity of their own natures, and independently on him. He would reject most certainly, with some of that sourness which he had in his temper as well as in his countenance, the imputation of betaking himself to a pitiful evasion. He would show, with great force, that his apprehension of admitting any thing independent on God into the corporeal or intellectual system, is a most reasonable apprehension, and no bugbear, as the doctor calls it. He might show, perhaps, the profane consequences of such metaphysics as the doctor's, by citing, among others, this assertion from the treatise we speak of here; "the eternal and immutable wisdom in the mind of God is thence participated by created beings independent upon the will of God." He might insist, that since "the wisdom of God is as much God as the will of God." and the will, by consequence, as the wisdom, it is absurd to distinguish them; and that it is something worse than absurd to reason about the divine, as we reason about the human intellect, to divide and parcel out the former on the plan of the latter. If the will of man is blind, dark, plumbean, flexible, and liable to be seduced, is the will of God to be conceived in the like manner? And if it is not, why are we led to conclude that a superior faculty is necessary to determine it, as the judgment of reason does, or should determine that of man? The ancients thought matter eternal, and assumed that the Demiurgus, or divine architect, composed the frame of the world with materials which were ready prepared, and independently on him in a confused chaos. Much in the same manner, such metaphysicians as the learned Cudworth have imagined a sort of intellectual chaos, a chaos of eternal ideas, of incorporeal essences, independent on God, self-existent, and therefore coeval with the Supreme Being, and therefore anterior to all other natures. In this intellectual chaos, God sees, and man must endeavor to see, the natures, the real essences of things: and thus the foundations of morality are laid higher than the existence of any moral agents, before there was any system of being, from which the obligations to it could result, or to whlch they could be applied: just as the same philosophers suppose the incorporeal essences of white and black, for instance, to have existed when there was no such thing as color, and those of a square and circle, when there was neither form nor figure.

Des Cartes would have broken off the dispute by acknow-

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ledging, what he had acknowledged before, that "all these things are unintelligible to us," and that by consequence all dispute about them is impertinent. I should have gone away confirmed in my opinion that there is nothing, in any kind of being, which does not depend on the Supreme, immense, all-perfect Being, nor any nature which does not depend on the Author of all nature: though I felt, at the same time, the difficulty of maintaining this opinion by argument. Mr. Locke observes how impossible it is for us to conceive certain relations, habitudes, and connections, visibly included in some of our ideas, to be separable from them even by infinite power. Let us observe, on this occasion, how impossible, or at least how extremely difficult it is for us to separate the idea of eternity from certain mathematical and moral truths, as well as from such as are called necessary, and are self-evident, on one hand; and, on the other, how impossible it is to conceive that truths should exist before the things to which they are relative; or particular natures and essences, before the system of universal nature, and when there was no being but the super-essential Being.

God knew, from all eternity, every system corporeal and intellectual that he created, in time. He knew by consequence, for he ordered, the various manners in which all the parts of these systems, and the systems themselves should operate on one another, the relations they should have, the proportions they should bear, the ideas they should communicate to creatures fitted to receive them, and capable of knowing only by them. All this he foreknew; but all this did not therefore exist: such an existence was at most eventual, and depended on the will, not the knowledge of God; if we may distinguish them, to be a little more intelligible. These immaterial forms and essences, if any such there were, and these immutable truths, for such there are most certainly, could not begin to exist in any proper sense till those systems of nature, to which the former are said to belong, and from which the latter do manifestly result, were called into actuality: and, in short, I cannot persuade myself that Des Cartes asserted without good reason, though he has been much censured for asserting it, that God is the author of the essence, as well as of the existence of all that he created.*

* What I have been led to say on this occasion makes it necessary to explain myself a little more fully; for though I dare not assert, like metaphysical divines of your and my communion, that the essences of things are in a strict and proper sense independent on God, any more than their existence; nor am able to conceive a dependency of existences or beings, and an independency of essences or manners of being; yet am I far from assenting to Des Cartes in all he has advanced on this subject and on matters relative to it. He has pushed hypothesis and even truth itself into chimera. There is a sort of

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If what has been said should be called hypothetical, it must be allowed to be less so, and, at the same time, to convey to the mind ideas and notions much more intelligible, than all that metaphysical jargon which Dr. Cudworth employs, after his Grecian masters. Is it any thing better than jargon to tell us, that our ideas of white, or black, which we receive

knight-errantry in philosophy as well as in arms. The end proposed by both is laudable; for nothing can be so more than to redress wrongs and to correct errors. But when imagination is let loose, and the brain is overheated, wrongs may be redressed by new wrongs, errors may be corrected by new errors.—The cause of innocence may be ill defended by heroes of one sort, and that of truth by heroes of another. Such was Don Quixotte, such was Des Cartes; and the imaginary character of one, and the real character of the other, gave occasion to the two most ingenious satirical romances that were ever written.

In one of these, a Chinese Mandarin meets some disciples of this philosopher as they travelled through the moon to those imaginary spaces, to that third heaven, where his thinking substance was employed in building a new world, or the model of a world, on his own principles of matter and motion, whilst his extended substance lay buried at Stockholm, or at Paris. The Mandarin had contracted acquaintance with father Mersenne in a former journey, had read the metaphysical meditations, was instructed in this part at least of the Cartesian philosophy, and the judgment he made of it I own to be mine. It contains opinions that seem to my apprehension most evidently false, and paralogisms so much oftener than demonstrations, that, when I am of the same mind, I am so, frequently, for reasons different from his, and even contrary to them. Thus, for instance, I take it to be evidently false that we have certainty of knowledge whenever we have clear and distinct ideas of any thing. Our ideas are often clear and distinct, and at the same time fantastical. Examples may be brought of such as we receive immediately and passively from outward objects, and of such as the mind frames by its own activity; for that which Gassendi acknowledges of himself, in his objections to the third meditation of Des Cartes, must have been alike true of others. Many things had seemed to him so clear and distinct that he held them for undoubted geometrical truths, which he was obliged afterwards, and on a further examination, to reject. To what purpose now is it said that an attribute which we perceive to be contained in the idea of any thing, may be affirmed of that thing with truth? Such an attribute may be affirmed with metaphysical truth of the most fantastical idea. But the difference between metaphysical and real truth is great, and though we have the former on our side in affirming the attribute, yet the whole must be chimerical if the idea be so, and such a process of reasoning may confirm us in fantastical, it cannot lead us to real knowledge.

This happened to the author of these maxims, the first of which is false, and the second precarious and uncertain, when he happened to demonstrate the existence of God. I do not believe that he meant to weaken this great truth by employing a sophism to prove it; but I believe that the affectation of novelty led him into paralogism, or an undesigned sophism. He assumed that he had in his mind a clear and distinct idea of an infinite all-perfect being; that this idea has an objective reality, or, in plainer terms, a real object, which may be known by the idea alone, and without any further proofs, and that necessary existence is contained, as indeed it is, in this idea. From all this he concluded that an infinite all-perfect Being exists, and is the cause of this idea which represents himself.

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from outward objects; our ideas of a square, or a circle, which we acquire by the help of our senses likewise; or our ideas of just and unjust, which we frame on experience, are incorporeal substances, eternal essences, and independent natures, things ingenerable, and unperishable, according to Plato and Aristotle, and which the former, as Tully expresses his sense, "negat gig-

Now that such a being exists, and that he can want no perfections conceivable or inconceivable by us, may be, and has been demonstrated invincibly. But to say that he can become the object of a clear and distinct idea, is to advance a groundless paradox. We may know very certainly that there is a figure which has a thousand sides, but no man will say, I think, that his mind represents these thousand sides to him in one clear and distinct idea, nor that he has any other than a general and confused notion of this figure. Much less will any man, who is not a sworn Cartesian, pretend that he perceives in his mind a clear and distinct idea of the infinite, all-perfect Being. He knows in general that there is such a Being, and that to suppose there is not, implies contradiction, or rather many contradictions. He has particular ideas and notions of some of the divine perfections, well determined as far as they extend, and yet inadequate. There are others which he cannot so determine, and he knows that there are many of which he can have no conception at all: for I do not agree with the Chinese philosopher, nor with the Jesuit who makes him speak, that there are any which seem incompatible to him, unless it be when he determines all the ideas he has, or when he pretends to have ideas he cannot have; and that we are apt to do so often, the very examples which are brought to show an incompatibility in the divine perfections, are sufficient to show.

To believe that there is a God, we must be taught this great principle of all religion, and receive it on authority. To know that there is one, we must go through a process of reasoning that connects certain evident truths intuitively together, and so arrives at demonstration. Though the atheist does not connect them into a demonstration of God's existence, yet he knows them all to be truths as well as the theist. He knows that they result from the nature of things. He pronounces them therefore immutable and eternal, as he conceives that nature to be; and can take no side in the question, whether they are dependent or independent on God, since he acknowledges no God. The theist makes a better use of these truths; for he connects them into a demonstration of God's existence, and instead of acknowledging the truth of no proposition, like Des Cartes, till he discovers the truth of this, he finds by experience that he could not have discovered the truth of this if he had not antecedently known and acknowledged the truth of many others. He owns several necessary truths not written nor imprinted on his mind, but such as he has framed by observing the agreement and disagreement of his ideas, and such as he concludes every other man who has the same faculties, and the same perceptions in his mind, must necessarily frame. He calls these truths eternal and immutable relatively to that system of nature from which they result. But he cannot call them independent as properly and as consistently as the atheist may, since he acknowledges a first cause, an author of this and every other system of nature.

Aristotle, who acts a part as well as the Chinese Mandarin in the scenes of the romance I quote, when he comes to examine those assertions of Des Cartes, "that the essences of things, and the truths called necessary, are dependent on God, and that they are immutable and eternal in no other sense than this, that God willed they should be so," supposes that the French phi-

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ni, sed semper esse, et ratione et intelligentiâ contineri?" Is it any thing better than jargon, to tell us that "these substances, essences, natures, are the primary objects of science, and the same too with the intellect that knows them; that they are uniform modifications of the human, and of the divine mind, and that although the former be created, yet the knowledge it has is

losopher could mean to speak of no essences except those of created beings, nor of any propositions except such as are advanced concerning them. That this was his meaning no doubt can be made, and he explained it sufficiently, when he said, "God is the author of the essence, as well as of the existence of his creatures." But even with this meaning, the Stagyrite, or rather the Jesuit, is not contented. Des Cartes should have reflected, he says, that truths which regard the essence of created beings, have a necessary connection with those which regard the essence of God. He brings an example. "That the creature is essentially dependent on God," is, he says, a proposition which belongs to the essence of the creature. "That God is the absolute master and the free cause of all beings," is a proposition which belongs to the essence of the Creator; and yet, that if one of these could be false, the other might be so too. Now surely, the want of reflection was, in this case, on the side of Aristotle himself. "If one of these propositions could be false, the other might be so too. Agreed, but not for the reason he gives, a supposed necessary and general connection between truths that regard the essences of created beings, and truths that regard the essence of the divine uncreated being. The reason is, that these propositions are in truth identical, that the first belongs to the essence of God as really as the last, and that to say the creature is dependent on the Creator, or the Creator is absolute master of the creature, is to affirm the same thing. Their essences are infinitely distant, but they are connected by this relation, and all other connection of them is purely imaginary.

We know the relation of the Creator to his creatures, and of the creatures to their Creator. But to talk of a necessary connection between truths that belong to the essence of one and the essences of the other, seems to be little else than metaphysical nonsense, and the language of men who seek to evade what they cannot explain. When God made the animal world, he made substances whose essences are unknown to us. Even our own is so. What now is the necessary connection between the incomprehensible essence of the Supreme, self-existent, all-perfect Being, and those of created substances which he has not given us the means of knowing, or between truths that belong to either? When God created finite extension he created all the possible modes of it, and among the rest, that of a space included within three lines, which we have observed, and have called a triangle. By contemplating this figure, we discover the various properties of it, and are able to demonstrate several truths concerning them, as the equality, for instance, of these three angles to two right angles. What now is the necessary connection between finite extension in the several essential modes of it, and an infinite but simple unextended spiritual substance, such as we conceive that of God to be in his ineffable manner of being? What is the necessary connection between true and false propositions relative to one, or the other?

On the whole, we may conclude in favor of Des Cartes, that he imagined no such absurd connection, and thought himself therefore at liberty to assume what he did assume, concerning the dependency of created essences, as well as existences on God, who is, according to him, the efficient cause of the truth of all true propositions about them. Truths relating to God always

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a participation of that one eternal, immutable, and uncreated wisdom?" In short, is it any thing better than jargon to talk of "ectypal prints, and derivative signatures from one archetypal intellect ar seal, like so many multiplied reflections of one and the same face made in several glasses?"

According to such philosophy as this, we may, and we must

have been, and always must be the same. They are absolutely from all eternity, and to all eternity independent on his will, for he is what he is, by the necessity of his nature, and self-existence is part of his essence. But nothing of this kind is applicable to the creatures. They might have been, or not have been, and the supposition of their non-existence implies no contradiction. It is true, indeed, that whilst they exist, they are what God made them to be, and omnipotence that can destroy them, cannot alter their essences. These essences, however, and the truths concerning them, are not so absolutely independent on God, as the adversaries of Des Cartes pronounce them to be; for even in the hypothesis, that God had no other share, nor exerted any other power in the great work of the creation, than that of calling essences he could not create into existence, by creating the things to which they belong; these essences are still indirectly, if not directly dependent on him, and he is doubly the cause of those truths which we affirm concerning them, as he called the essences into existence, and as he created beings capable of perceiving them.

This distinction between existences and essences, the former of which, that are dependent on the will of God, drew the latter, that are independent on his will, along with them, into the system of things that are, is not very clear.—Might not the obscurity be taken away by taking away this distinction, and by understanding essences to be nothing more than manners of being determined by the power that gives the being, and manners of conceiving determined by the power that forms the conceptions? When God made limited extension, he made it capable of receiving various modifications, and of producing various appearances. These we distinguish by names for our own use. We call them circles for instance, or squares, or triangles, (I speak not here of substances, for with their real essences it is not pretended that we have any thing to do,) and when we have given them these names, philosophers assume that they are real essences, independent on God, though he is the author of all extension, and gave us faculties to perceive these forms of it.

It would be tedious, and needless to speak of the doctrine of the schools concerning essences. I shall content myself to make one observation more on this head. The combinations of ideas which are distinguished by the term of mixed modes, and are principally of the moral kind, have no bad title to be esteemed essences. We compound them, we can therefore decompound them, and the real constitution of every species of them, cannot be unknown to us. They are not, however, essences like those which several philosophers have imagined, from Plato down to Cudworth, and others infected by the same metaphysics. They are not ingenerable, nor immutable, nor unperishable in a proper sense, for if they were so, these effects would be more perfect than their cause, since the human mind is their cause, and in some sort their creator, and since the human mind is none of these. They are not independent neither on the will of God. They are abstract complex notions. Such Mr. Locke gives us leave to call them, "as by a peculiar right appertaining to the understanding."* The mind makes them arbitrarily and oc-

* Lib. iii. c. 5.

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pierce into the mystery of God's nature, and into the depths of his wisdom, to arrive at a knowledge of his will relatively to man. We must found the principles of morality, not on our knowledge of what our Creator has done, but on our knowledge of what he knows. We must consult his will as it is signified by the constitution of the system wherein he has placed us, but we must abstract ourselves from this, and deduce our moral obligations from an eternal reason, from the immutable and independent natures of things. We must contemplate the same archetypes according to which our system of being was made, to know how we are to conduct ourselves in it: and thus the same rule becomes common to God and man. Our knowledge is no longer human, it is divine. It is no longer derived from outward impressions, and inward operations; our ideas have no longer their distinct archetypes existing out of the mind, or formed in it; they are all the impressions of an archetypal seal, that is, of the divine intellect. A strange method, surely, of proving our ideas if not the knowledge we acquire by them, to be independent on God.

I cannot soar so high as Plato and Cudworth. I will not sink so low as Protagoras, and other ancients; as Hobbes, and other moderns. The former amaze, instead of instructing me; and if I understand the latter, I only understand them, to know that they impose on themselves, and would impose on me, the grossest adsurdities. Strange extremes! When Cudworth holds up the metaphysical glass to my eye, I see something, I know not what; something that glitters at an immeasurable distance from

casionally, by virtue of a power to conceive things in this manner, which God has bestowed, and directed to the improvement of general knowledge. There they fluctuate: they are not the same essences in every mind, nor always in the same mind; and if they answer their purpose in any degree, that degree is proportionable to the mental power of conceiving things in this manner which God has given us. Thus even the truths we call necessary, the eternæ veritates of which we boast, are one way or other dependent on the Supreme Being. Their necessity is not antecedent, but consequential to the existence of material and intellectual created natures. Their necessity arises from a conformity to these natures, which we are made able to discern intuitively in certain cases.

But it is time to conclude a note too long perhaps already, though I have hurried through it, and touched the matter of it more lightly than I could have done. I do not pretend to decide the question between Des Cartes and his adversaries. All I would inculcate is this, that since his opinion may receive a reasonable interpretation, it should not be condemned as absolutely, and as dogmatically as it has been; and that it becomes a theist to incline always to the side which ascribes the greatest possible power to God, from that which has even the appearance of limiting it by assuming an independency, when a dependency on him implies no contradiction.

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me. When Hobbes holds it up, he changes the position: and I see something monstrous at the very end of the glass.

As whimsical, and as little intelligible as the doctrines of the former are, they may lead men to think, that the will of God, signified by his works, not being the sole true criterion of moral good and evil; and since there is another criterion antecedent to this, nay, even the criterion of it, that is, the eternal reason of immutable independent natures; they ought to have an entire regard to these, and none to the will of God signified by his works: because in them he has done little else than clothe these eternal uncreated essences with a garment of existence, "sartoris instar rerum essentias vestire existentiâ." Cudworth declares against this absurd conceit, which Aristotle too chastises. But then what did the good man, and all those who have held the same opinions, mean? To answer truly, they thought, as men deep in imaginary science are apt to do, that thay had much meaning when they had really none.

After sounding loudly in our ears, and repeating dogmatically, that things are what they are by their natures, eternal, immutable, and independent on the will of God, they are driven to distinguish, that they may avoid all mistakes, as they pretend, and to assert, not what their words import, but something which their words do not import, nor can be said to import any where out of the schools. When they talk of natures by which things are what they are, they do not mean, it seems, as any vulgar man would have thought, the constituent essences of things, the real natures by which alone things can be what they are. They mean something which is not a nature nor essence, but something which schoolmen and philosophers have been pleased to call so. When they say, that things are white by whiteuess, triangular by triangularity, or just by justice, and that omnipotence itself cannot make them white, triangular, nor just, without such certain natures; a man who is no metaphysician, nor logician, must be induced to think their meaning to be, that God makes things, dependent on him, to exist conformably to natures independent on him. If they were not thought to have some such meaning, they could be understood to mean nothing more than this, that things are white, triangular, and just; because God has made them white, triangular, and just; and that omnipotence itself cannot make black, square, nor unjust, what omnipotence makes white, triangular, and just. These are most immutable truths, no doubt, and deserve to have their place at the fountain-head of science; but these philosophers do not mean by their eternal, independent natures, any natures at all. They mean such intelligible essences, and rationes of things, as are objects

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of the mind. Now, the objects of our minds being nothing but our ideas, it follows, that these natures, so much talked of, are not natures, but simple or complex ideas of natures; and all the incorporeal substances vanish into air, that is, they are confessedly fantastic, not real. They are merely certain abstract ideas which philosophers have taken it into their heads to affirm that they frame, and in which affirmation I may have leave to be of opinion, that they deserve no more credit than a man who is in any other delirium. They who are as subtile as Aristotle or Cudworth, who can discover, with the first, that sense is the same with sensible things, and with both, that understanding is the same with the things understood, may find out, likewise, that the nature of a thing, and the idea of that nature are one and the same. But I suppose, that they who preserve their common sense free from the taint of metaphysics, will not easily conceive, that their ideas, however general or abstracted, can be called, with the least propriety, immaterial essences, incorporeal substances, eternal, immutable, and so on.

It is an observation of Mr. Locke, that "we have very few abstract names for our ideas of substances, and that the few which the schools have forged, could never get into common use, nor obtain public approbation; whereas all our simple ideas have abstract as well as concrete names, and so have our ideas of modes and relations." From hence that great author infers a confession of all mankind, that they have no ideas of the real essences of substances, and a declaration that their simple ideas, and those of modes and relations are real essences, or the ideas of real essences. Now, the truth of the supposed confession I admit entirely; but the truth of the supposed declaration is not so evident, and requires some explanation as it is expressed. It is, if I mistake not, in part false, and in part true, and serves neither Mr. Locke's purpose, nor Dr. Cudworth's, even where it is true. To argue from the use of words to the reality of things, is no very sure method. Languages are framed by the vulgar, not by philosophers; and when names are improperly given, and words come to be improperly applied, custom establishes them soon, and they easily mislead even the minds of philosophers. The subject before us affords an example of this sort, and if we examine it a little attentively, we shall find a corner of Mr. Locke's system about ideas, rent and torn, but the whole fabric of Dr. Cudworth's demolished to the foundations.

Words have been invented and applied, and names have been assigned, as men wanted them, or fancied, by mistake, that they wanted them, to commuuicate their ideas with more precision, or even to conceive them more distinctly. Whatever advantage has been procured to the improvement of knowledge by the

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first manner of proceeding, much confusion and error have arisen from the second; innumerable instances of which there are. One of the greatest, and of the most pernicious in its consequences, we find in the use and application of the word abstraction. There is a very practicable operation of the mind, by which we are said to abstract ideas, and by which we do, in effect, generalise them in a certain manner, and to a certain degree, by substituting one as representative of many. There is another supposed, but impracticable operation of the mind, by which some philosophers have made themselves and others believe, that they abstract, from a multitude of particular ideas, the idea of one general nature or essence, which is all of them, and none of them; whereas, in truth, though they can define general natures or essences in very clear propositions, they cannot frame an idea of any general nature, which is not a particular idea of that nature.

Since men do not commonly employ abstract names for their ideas of substances, it is a shrewd sign indeed, that they are not conscious of any ideas of substances made by the second kind of abstraction, as Mr. Locke observes, but content themselves, in this case, with general ideas made by the first. To talk of nominal essences, and the abstraction of such, comes too near the gibberish of the schools about genera and species; and if it does not coincide with the doctrine of certain essential forms, or moulds, wherein different things are cast, as it were, to constitute different natures, it perplexes the understanding, and darkens the plainest objects of it but little less. If we lay aside these refinements, and think for ourselves, we shall soon discover, unless I am extremely mistaken, that the former method of abstracting or generalising our ideas, is the universal practice of mankind; and that the latter is purely imaginary, not only in the case of substances, and of simple ideas, whereof the real essences are, in my opinion, equally unknown to us, but in the case of modes and relations, whose real essences must of necessity be known to us, since our understanding frames them.

Nothing can be more true than what Mr. Locke himself confesses, that "general and universal belong not to the real existence of things, but are the inventions and creatures of the understanding, made by it for its own use, and concern only signs, whether words or ideas."* On this principle I proceed; but it will not carry me to all the consequences my master, for such I am proud to own him, deduced from it. Let us consider substances in the first place. We have innumerable ideas of particular substances, and I need not stand to show how little improvement we should make in knowledge, and how impossi-

* Essay, lib. iii, c. 3.

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ble it would be to reason, or to communicate any reasonings about them, by the help of such ideas alone. How then does the mind proceed? As these complex ideas are innumerable, so are they beyond measure various. Out of this variety the mind selects such as have a more remote, and such as have a more immediate resemblance, and classes them accordingly. From this operation of the mind has arisen the school distinction of genus and species. Now, to speak according to it, which we may do intelligibly on this occasion, as the mind is unable, by abstraction, or any imaginable way, to comprehend any one species, and much more any one genus, under one general idea, it comprehends each under one general name, and we say, for instance, man or animal. The mind does still more in the former case; for, all the ideas that compose a sort or species having a close resemblance to one another, the mind substitutes one, as I said above, to represent them all. This ideal man is neither Peter nor Paul; it is not the idea of any particular man; it is a particular idea of man made general by the application. The archetypes of this phantasm are without, and it is abstracted, if you please to use the word, from them. But it is so far from being an abstract universal idea of man, abstracted from those particular forms, or complex phantasms, which the mind represents to itself (as Cudworth affirms against intuitive knowledge) that it is one of these very phantasms. It is not, in short, an idea of humanity. The mind creates it to supply the want of an idea we cannot have. A general universal idea is inconsistent with the real existence of things: but such a particular idea of that which may exist becomes itself an archetype, according to which we include, in the same ideal class, or exclude out of it, the objects that strike our senses. Thus it becomes general, by the use the mind makes of it, though it be particular, and be signified by a particular word.

The mind proceeds in the same manner with respect to all the other sorts or species, into which it has classed its ideas of substances. But with respect to kinds, or genera, this cannot be. They may be, and they are comprehended under distinct general names; but none of them can be represented to the mind by any particular phantasm or idea, as in the other case. How should there be one common archetype for things, that have not a close, but a very remote resemblance? Such are the various sorts which every kind contains: and therefore when the mind would advert to the idea, as well as to the name of animal, it finds itself disappointed. Far from having any abstract universal idea, it has not so much as a particular idea that may be generalised, and stand in the place of the other.

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There are two other operations which the mind performs not constantly, but occasionally. The first may serve to facilitate the communication of knowledge: the second has served to nothing but to facilitate the introduction of error. From the names that signify particular sorts, we deduce sometimes, and as the mind has need of them, adjectives, or concrete terms, that fix and appropriate to each sort whatever belongs to it, or is meant to be ascribed to it. Thus from man we derive human, and we speak of human figure when we would signify the figure peculiar to him, and of human passions when we would apply those to him which belong to him, though they are, at the same time common to him, and to other animals. But the schoolmen have not stopped here. They have invented words to signify, very confusedly and falsely, what was signified very distinctly and truly before. Thus, for example, they have coined the terms, humanity and animality. If they meant to signify, by these terms, nothing more than what we know to be comprehended under the names of man and animal, I should have no objection to the use of them, nor to those of tableity, cuppeity, and gobleity, when custom had established them, as much as Diogenes scoffed at Plato for introducing them into philosophy. But Plato did mean something else, and so has many a deep metaphysician and logician, since his time, and after his example. They have not meant only those appearances, according to which the minds of men have sorted things, which Mr. Locke calls nominal essences, and which, he says, are the abstract ideas their names stand for: but they have meant real essences, intelligible natures, the pattern and archetypes, according to which every thing is what it is. The first is, to me, unintelligible; for I neither comprehend how essences can be purely nominal, nor how words can be abstract ideas: and the second is, I suppose, at this time, an exploded opinion among rational men. In short, he must know his own mind very ill, or knowing it well in other instances, must be strangely deceived in this by the prejudices of imagination, who can persuade himself, that the words humanity and animality have any other ideas annexed to them than the words man and animal. When the first raises any idea in the mind, it is one of those complex phantasms that have been mentioned, and that draws after it, successively, but rapidly, the ideas of all those qualities, corporeal and intellectual, which are signified when we join to them the term, human. When the second raises any idea at all there, a confused huddle of ideas rush into the mind at once; an assemblage of several species of animals that throng together, like those which throng about Adam, in the famous design of

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Mr. John Overton, to receive their names from the first of men, who became thus the institutor of nominal essences.

But now, if it should be confessed, that we know nothing of the real essences of substances, and therefore can abstract no such ideas of them as some have pretended; if it should be confessed further that nominal essences are nothing more than general names of particular things, not made by abstraction but by imposition; yet still it would be asserted, perhaps, that our simple ideas are real essences; that the mind is able to abstract their general from their particular natures; and that we give them, for that reason, both abstract and concrete names; the truth of which latter propositions I should take the liberty to deny, as well as that of the former. Our simple ideas, not one of which it is in our power to make, or to unmake, may be called, properly enough, intellectual atoms, the principles or materials of our whole intellectual system. Matter, and the atoms that compose it, have been thought eternal, and if we assume, that they were created in time, we must assume too, that they were created at once. The same atoms, specific in number, as well as of specific natures, pass through all the changes, and take all the various forms, which we observe in the material world. There is no new, no continued creation of them. But we know, consciously, that there is a continued creation of these intellectual atoms, that is, of simple ideas, in the intellectual world, in different minds, and even in the same mind, neither specific in number, nor, perhaps, always exactly so in nature: and thus they are not only combined, as the former are always, with one another, that is, with the same, but new ideas, that arise from new perceptions, enter very often into these combinations. There is another difference to be observed, much more to our purpose. We can analyse more easily, and with greater success, our complex into simple ideas, than we can decompound substances. In one of these operations, we go up to the intellectual atoms. In the other, we stop far short of the corporeal. To what now is this difference owing? Is it owing to our strength, or to our weakness? Is it a difference, as it may appear at first sight, in favor of the human mind? Much otherwise. It serves only to show the deficiency and imperfection of our simple ideas, of the first principles of all our knowledge. If these were not so confined, and so superficial as they are most evidently, if they were extended to more objects, and made their impressions on us from a spring that lay deeper in the nature of things, we should know much more than we do concerning the composition and decomposition of substances. If they were real essences, or the ideas of real essences, we should be acquainted with the real essences of substances, at least to a certain degree: for, what do we mean, when

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we say, that we have no knowledge of the real essences of substances, except these two things? We mean certainly, that we have not a number of ideas sufficient for the acquisition of such knowledge: and thus the deficiency of simple ideas causes one half of our ignorance about the complex ideas of substances. We mean, likewise, that the simple ideas, which we perceive by the impressions of outward objects, are often false, and always inadequate to the nature of these objects; and thus the imperfection of simple ideas causes another half, at least, of our ignorance about the complex ideas of substances.

Simple ideas are real essences. Of what? Of simple ideas? Of themselves? Just so certain metaphysical ideas are real ideas. They are really in the mind; but they have no other reality. Such essences and such ideas are chimerical alike. All our simple ideas arise from sensation and reflection, from the impressions of outward objects, and from the operations of our minds. What the powers are that make these impressions on the mind in a passive state, we know as little as we do, what those are to which the operations of the mind, in an active state, are due. But this we know, the powers that cause are more properly essences, than the simple ideas that are caused by them. An essence is that by which a thing is what it is. We have an idea of white, we know what it is in our minds: but do we know by virtue of what, it is what it is there? Certainly we do not. It is not so much as the idea of any knowable essence: how can it be itself a known essence? Or, what seek we further than to know that it is a sensation?

Such concrete names were necessary to be invented, not to signify things that exist by themselves like substances, but to signify qualities, so we usually call them, that cannot exist independently of some substance in which they appear to exist, and are conveyed to the mind in the complex idea of it.

As it is real or apparent want that determines the invention and use of names, so there have been some, and may be more invented, to signify, by one general word, and to appropriate to one substance, all the particular ideas that men conceive to belong to it, or desire to apply to it. This has been observed already, and here we observe further, that these terms are limited by the substance to which they are applied, human by man, golden by gold, and so in some, not in many, other instances of sorts or kinds, just as custom has decided. It is not much otherwise in the case of the concrete terms, which signify each one simple idea. The complex idea of man was in the mind, before the word human was invented to signify, without the trouble of enumerating them, all the particular ideas comprehended in that complex idea. The substantive gave occasion to the adjective.

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So the complex ideas of all those substaaces that communicate to us, among other simple ideas, those of white and black, for instance, were in the mind before the names of these simple ideas were invented. This was enough for use: and our ideas, when these names were invented, as well as the names of the several substances to which they belonged, were enough determined and distinguished. But the schools were not thus contented. They endeavored to establish the doctrine of general natures abstracted from particular; and since they endeavored it, without success, in the complex ideas of substances, they resolved to do it in the case of our simple ideas; and thus whiteness and blackness, and all the abstract names of simple ideas, were confirmed in general use.

The same simple ideas being communicated to us from a multitude of different substances; and being observed to be the same in the child, and in the man, in the peasant, and in the philosopher, they might easily pass for adequate ideas of real natures imparted to all the substances wherein they were perceived. Thus the vulgar might think very naturally; and, in fact, not only children, but much the greatest part of men, are firmly persuaded, that the idea of white, which they perceive in snow or milk, is whiteness in the snow or milk. Nay, this opinion, exploded as it is at present, has been that of the great oracles of philosophy, and many puerilities have been grounded on it, which are scarce yet awhile laughed out of the world. They who saw formerly, or who see now, the impropriety of these words, in a philosophical sense, as they denote real essences, or abstract ideas of such, may have thought, however, not only that the use of them is of some conveniency in language, but that it is a very harmless concession to the vulgar. They may have thought it too an indulgence of no great moment to the doctors of abstraction, who have refined themselves, on this occasion, as philosophers do sometimes, into vulgar error.

Whiteness and blackness seem to stand in the same degree of a supposed abstraction with humanity, and color with animality. This would be admitted by some, whilst others would contend that it is practicable, with application, and a strong effort of the mind, to abstract general natures of sorts or species from many particular ideas that we perceive to be the same in substances of different sorts or species, as in the former instance, that of whiteness or blackness, they say they do; but that it is impracticable to abstract such a general nature from many particular ideas that we perceive not to be the same, though co-existing in the same substance, as in the instance of humanity, they say they cannot. They would contend further, that though it be practicable to abstract the general natures even of kinds, as well

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as the less general natures of sorts, where simple ideas are alone concerned; yet it is impracticable to do the same, where the various sorts that compose the kind are so many complex ideas, as in the instance of animality they say they cannot. But, I think, we may affirm all this to be whimsical and false alike, without entering into the dispute between these doctors of abstraction, and on this single principle, whereof we have an intuitive knowledge, that things cannot exist in our minds as it is impossible they should exist in nature. Now singulars do, but universals, about which so much noise has been made in the schools, and so many good heads have been broken formerly in the universities of London, and of Paris, do not exist in nature. It is, therefore, as impossible to abstract ideas of whiteness or blackness from all white or black things, as it is to abstract an idea of humanity from all human existence, or an idea of color from all things colored, as it is to abstract an idea of animality from all animal existence. In all these cases, having no real essence to abstract, we have nothing to abstract.

Let us consider, whether we are able to make such abstractions, when real essences are known to us, as they are in modes and relations. For my part, I know that I am not. I am utterly unable to elevate my mind from particulars to generals, as we must do in order to acquire Dr. Cudworth's apodictical knowledge, of which therefore I must be content to remain deprived. I know the real essence of triangularity, and can define it in one short proposition. But to contemplate triangularity, abstracted from every triangular figure, is to my narrow and weak mind as impossible as to contemplate humanity, abstracted from every human figure, and every human quality. He who can frame the idea of a triangle, which is neither right, obtuse nor acute-angled, nor, in short, of any triangular species, but is all, and none of these, at once: he, I say, if in truth there is any such, he must be of a species different from mine, as surely as he would be so, if his sight could pierce to the centre of the earth, or discern every frozen inhabitant of Saturn. Triangularity is so far from being no particular triangle, that it is every particular triangle: and, no man, as I presume, can think of a space included by three lines that meet at three angles, without thinking of some one or more particular triangles. Triangularity can be no otherwise represented to the mind. The definition gives particular ideas, but is not itself an idea. I know the real essence of justice, and can define it several ways, as for instance, by saying after Tully, "Justitiæ primum munus est ut ne cui quis noceat, nisi lacessitus injuriâ; deinde ut communibus pro communibus utatur, privatis autem ut suis." But what then? Do these definitions, or their contraries, a conformity to one, or

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the other of which constitutes every action just, or unjust, form in any mind one abstract idea of justice? We can contemplate each of these apart, and compare any particular action with it, but we cannot abstract any general nature, with which we may compare every action that falls under some one of these definitions. Justice is a word that denotes particular natures, under a general term, but expresses no general nature.

If there were such general natures as are supposed, they would exist in the mind, and be perceived there. They do not exist in the mind; for they are not perceived by it. They exist then no where, whatever Plato might dream, or might say hypothetically and poetically. The mind creates real essences for its own use; but that the mind abstracts, even from these creatures of its own, any general natures, is a mere poetical fiction, which has been adopted, like many other fictions, of the same author, for a philosophical truth. All the real essences we know are so far from being uncreated, that they are creatures of the human mind; they are so far from being independent, that they are dependent on the will of man, as far as concerns their existing or not existing; they are so far from being ingenerable, unperishable, and even immutable, that they begin to be and cease to be in the mind, and that whilst they actually exist there, if they were not maintained by distinct names, and by a constant attention of the mind to them and to their names, they would fluctuate and vary without any precision of steadiness.

When the Stagyrite declared most dogmatically, that he would have Heraclitus, Cratylus, and Protagoras to know, that, besides sensible things, which they supposed always to flow, and he admitted to be always mutable, there were other beings or entities, neither subject to motion, corruption, nor generation, but immoveable essences, the objects of theoretical knowledge, of the first philosophy, and of pure mathematics; when he spoke in such high terms, I say, the flowing philosophers might have told him that intellectual beings or entities were very much given to flow, as well as sensible things; and that immoveable essences, how well soever fixed by definitions, were not always immovable even in his own mind, since they did not appear to be strictly so in his writings.

After saying so much about these abstract ideas, I must freely confess that I scarce comprehend what they are intended to be. They are separate from matter, according to Aristotle. They are free from all corporeal sympathy, according to Cudworth. Nay they are, even those of them whose real essences we know, such as triangularity and justice, imperfect ideas, ideas that cannot exist, ideas wherein some parts of several different and inconsistent ideas are put together, according to Mr. Locke. Thus

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abstraction becomes as great a mystery in philosophy, as any that religion holds out to us: and I am so little able to unfold mysteries, that I might sit forty years together in deep meditation over against a white wall, as a Chinese philosopher is said to have done, and to as little purpose as he, if I pretended to unfold this inexplicable sort of abstraction. Who can help smiling, when he is told, that by the help of such ideas, and of certain self-evident maxims, knowledge is a comprehension of things proleptically, or by way of anticipation, or *à priori;* and that abstraction is that higher station from whence the mind comprehends things in this manner, from whence by its subtile sharpness it penetrates into the essential profundity of body, of sphericalness, of triangularity, &c.

Strange effects of mysterious abstraction! Strange foundations of eternal and immutable morality! They might be rejected with contempt, if they were absurd only; but they are carried so far that they become profane, a sort of metaphysical blasphemy, and deserve indignation. Could I suspect the least necessary connection between such opinions and the proofs of God's existence, I should not treat them as familiarly as I have done, and intend to do. But there is nothing which shocks me so much, in the treatise I speak of, as the attempt to prove in a circle, that since universal notions, the supposed immediate objects of science, are eternal and necessarily existent, there is an eternal and necessarily existent mind; and that since there is such a mind, there must be such ideas and notions as the author assumes. But it may be worth while to set this reasoning down a little more at large.

"Since we cannot conceive that there was ever a time when it was not yet actually true that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, or that equals added to equals produce equals, and the like in other instances; these intelligible natures, these necessary verities had a being before the material world and all particular intellects had any." Again: "Since these natures, these verities, are, according to Plato, nothing but noëmata, objective notions or knowledges, that is, in good English, objects of thought, they could not exist without some mind in which they were comprehended. There is, therefore, an eternal mind which comprehended them always, or rather a mind which is itself these natures, these verities, these abstract ideas." Thus again, and to reason quite round the circle. "Since there is an eternal mind, that being must always comprehend himself, the extent of his own power, the ideas of all possible things. Now these natures, these verities, are included in these ideas. Our abstract ideas and universal notions are therefore eternal and self-existent like God himself. If there were none such,

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there would be no God. But there are such because there is a God, on whom however they are independent. They cannot be modificatlons of matter, they mnst be therefore modifications of an eternal mind. Every thing that is imperfect must needs depend on something that is perfect in the same kind. There is therefore a cognation, or connection, between our created minds and the increated mind. Our imperfect intellect must be therefore a derivative participation of the perfect intellect."

This rhapsody of jargon is faithfully extracted, and, for the most part in Cudworth's own words.

A close affinity between the divine and the human mind, and a certain sameness of ideas and notions, is the common boast of metaphysical theology: and father Thomassin, and many other learned and good men of all communions, have talked as profanely on the subject as Cudworth. Their very great learning seduced them into error: they were too good scholars to be good philosophers, and whilst their minds were filled with the thoughts of Plato and Aristotle, of St. Austin, and other refining as well as declaiming Christian fathers, there was no room for their own; or their own were grafted on these, and extended and improved from them. "La passion même que nous avons pour la verité nous trompe quelquefois, lorsqu'elle est trop ardente. Mais le desir de paroître savant est ce qui nous empêche le plus d'acquerir une science véritable."* It is father Malebranche who speaks thus: and he was himself a great example of what is here said; for though his sublime genius could not stoop to copy servilely, as others have done, yet he took his hints and his manner from Plato and St. Austin principally, and added one beautiful whimsy to another, till he built up a system that carries no conviction to the mind, and only serves to give great admiration of the author.

II.

Other divines, besides Cudworth, have assumed that God knows according to our manner of knowing, by the help of ideas. Thus Clarke, in his book of Demonstrations, which has had much more reputation than it deserves, assumes that goodness and justice in God are the same as in our ideas, and that the relations, proportions, and rationes of things are absolutely and necessarily what they appear to be to the understandings of all intelligent beings; among whom he must needs comprehend the Supreme Being, since he makes these relations, proportions and rationes of things to be the rule or law by which God proceeds,

* Recherche, &c. B. II, p. ii, c. 7.

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and for his observation of which he appeals to man. Thus he affirms, at least, that God knows by the help of ideas. But Malebranche outshoots him, and confines the Supreme all-perfect Being to this human manner of knowing. He allows him no other. He denies that he can have any other. The ideas of bodies and of all other objects "que nous n'appercevons point par eux mêmes," because they are exterior to the soul, are perceived by us for no other reason but this, they are in God, in him we see them. All the ideas of created beings must be in God, it was absolutely necessary that they should be so; because if they had not been so, he could not have created such beings. "Puisqu' autrement il n' auroit pas pu les produire." He could no more have made Adam, if he had not had the idea of Adam in his mind, than Kneller could have painted your picture, if he had not had the idea of you in his mind.

Heathen divines built their theology, not only on physical, but on moral philosophy. They made gods, not only of the elements and the parts of this material system, but of the faculties of the human intellect, as of memory; of the passions of the mind, as of hope, fear, love; of our affections and habits, as of piety, of justice, of virtue, and so on. Now it seems that if this ancient polytheism and idolatry was to be renewed, the doctrine I have combatted would contribute extremely to the introduction of it. These abstract ideas, every one of which is an eternal essence, an intelligible nature, an incorporeal substance, might pass for proper objects of adoration; since they are represented as eternal patterns according to which all things are made or done, as eternal principles by a participation of which every thing is what it is. Why should they not be adored? They are independent on God: nay God is so far dependent on them, that his will is determined, and his conduct and operations are directed, by them.

Our proneness to measure all other beings by ourselves grows up into strange extravagance, when we presume to measure in some sort even God by this rule. God has given us a manner of knowing fitted to our system, and sufficient for all our real business in it. We can conceive no other. But is there then no other? Is the positive nature of God, is the extent of his power confined to the limits of our conceptions? There is an eye which never winks, a sun which never sets; but with Dr. Cudworth's leave, the absurdity lies on the side of the philosopher, who pretends to see with this eye, and to walk in the brightness or lucidity, to use his word, of this sun; not on the side of a modest and humble theist, who is far from all metaphysical presumption and theological arrogance, and therefore dares not assume so much in his own favor, nor in favor of any

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created being. Such a man will think that he makes a much more apposite simile, when he says that we are shut up in one of those dark caverns of the universe, mentioned in the Phædo; that there we grope about after knowledge, not by the light of the sun, but by that of a small and dim taper. This light, whatever it is, was bestowed on us by God. He gave us our light. He did not give us his own. They who think in this manner cannot be suspected of being too near akin to those ancient theologues Aristotle speaks of, who fetched the original of God and all things out of night. They who think in the other, would do well to consider whether they are not too near akin to those, who have promoted, in all ages of heathenism and of Christianity, superstition in religion, paradox in philosophy, and enthusiasm in both.

It may be said, you know it has been said by one I love and honor,* "that the immediate object of knowledge being called an idea, there is no inconvenience in saying that God knows objects, that he knows ideas in the proper sense of the word, which is Locke's sense; although our conception of God's knowledge, or any other of his attributes, be infinitely inadequate, yet he saw no absurdity in supposing that human knowledge hath some similitude to the divine, as a thing finite and imperfect, and weak and small, can have to that which is infinite and all perfect; nor in supposing, with the Scripture, that we are made in the likeness of God; nor in supposing with the Greek poet, that we are his offspring; and with the Latin, that we contain *divinæ particulum auræ.*" It seems evident to him, "that intellect is above the powers of motion and figure, and that it is of kind altogether incorporeal." I respect the authority which made this objection to what I have said, and shall therefore go as far as I can in submission to it. I see no inconveniency in speaking of the divine ideas, when we speak of the divine knowledge. On the contrary, I see much conveniency in it; because I apprehend that we can neither conceive any thing, nor explain our conceptions on many occasions, concerning God's knowledge, without ascribing to him hypothetically the sole manner of knowing that is known to us. But I think it, however, both absurd and profane to pronounce dogmatically, that this is God's manner of knowing, that he has no other, and that without the help of ideas he could neither govern the world as he governs it, nor have made it as he made it. To say, in allegorical or poetical style, that we are made in the image of God, that we are his offspring, or that we contain *divinæ particulam auræ,* may pass for some of those images by which we

* B. of C.

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endeavor, and often improperly enough, to help our own thoughts, and the communication of them; but surely they are not to be employed in the didactic style, and so as to pass, not for distant images of truths that we cannot contemplate nearly and directly, but for real truths which we do so contemplate. I do not believe that matter can draw intellect, to use an expression of L'Abbadie, out of its own bosom; neither do I believe that the incorporeity of the soul can be proved from the non-existence of matter, which my right reverend friend takes to be a demonstrable point. Intellect is certainly above the mere powers of motion and figure, according to all the ideas we have of them; and therefore I embrace very readily the opinion of those, who assume that God, who has, without any color of doubt, notwithstanding some logical and trifling cavils, the power of doing it, has been pleased to superadd to several systems of matter, in such manner and in such proportions as his infinite wisdom has thought fit, the power of thinking. Every other hypothesis seems to me unconceivable, and this, of which so much has been said here, particularly dangerous. It might serve to introduce polytheism, or it is not very far from Spinozism. I could be an anthropomorphite and believe the human figure to be God's figure, as soon as I could believe the human intellect to be God's intellect, and the modifications of the former to be the modifications of the latter. If I was absurd enough to be persuaded of this, I should be absurd enough easily to believe, with the help of intelligible natures and incorporeal substances, or substances "quasi incorporeal," as many gods as men, and to erect a larger pantheon than the gods of the heathen or your saints require. If I avoided this extreme, the same hypothesis might draw me into another, and I might persuade myself, that since there is an universal mind, in which all ideas are contained, and of which every particular mind is a participation, every intelligence, down to the lowest, is a modification of the same mind, as every material system is a modification of the same matter; which would bid fair for a composition with Spinoza: and two substances might render a Supreme Being as unnecessary as one substance, to which the modifications of both kinds are ascribed in a manner less conformable to our ideas, and much more repugnant to theology.

I have as good a right to deny as the most dogmatical writer can possibly have to affirm, that the Supreme Being knows by the intervention of ideas. Nay the negative is more probable than the affirmative on many accounts, and particularly on this, that our manner of knowing seems neither immediate, absolute, nor perfect enough to be ascribed to him. To talk positively of the divine nature and attributes, and to determine,

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on our supposed knowledge of them, anythimg more than we are able to collect from his works, and the proceedings of his providence is very great presumption, though the common practice of divines. But to deny concerning them whatever implies the least defect or imperfection, is highly reasonable, and essential to true theism. Of the excellences of God's nature we can have no adequate ideas: they are infinite. But this we can know most certainly, that those things, which are short even of the excellences we are able to comprehend, ought not to be ascribed to him. That the first cause of all things is an intelligent cause, may be proved invincibly *à posteriori*, and can be proved no other way; after which it will not require much logic to demonstrate *à priori*, that the all-perfect Being must be omniscient, as well as self-existent. But how he knows, or what knowledge is in him, we are unable to say. We may frame dark and confused notions of knowledge vastly superior to our own in kind as well as degree, and we should do much better to rest in these, dark and confused as they are, than to frame others, which, being deduced from our own, are seemingly too adequate to be really true. The past, the present, and the future, as we conceive them, are known alike to the Supreme Being, not by the perception, the retention, or the anticipation of ideas but in in a manner inconceivable by us; for there is, I think, a plain fallacy in this expression, that the immediate object of knowledge being called an idea, we may say that God knows an object, that he knows an idea. When we speak of objects of human knowledge, we allude to the sense of seeing, and, we apply, very properly, the allusion to the inward perceptions of the mind. But surely no man, who tries to elevate his notions of the all-perfect Being as much as he can above the low level of humanity, for so I will call what we know of the human nature, can think the same allusion applicable to the divinity. Outward and inward sense have a great connexity in the human system. The former gives occasion to the latter, they help one another, and both have their objects. But it will no more follow that God thinks like man, than that he sees like man. He may have conscious knowledge of all things possible, as we have conscious knowledge of our own existence, a knowledge which prevents even thought, so far from being originally, whatever we make it afterwards, an object of thought. But further. When God is said to know objects, he is said to know ideas. The words are taken synonimously on this occasion. But we must distinguish them. A knowledge of things as they are, and a knowledge of the ideas of them, are extremely different, as different as immediate and reflected light, as absolute and relative knowledge. Every thing

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we know is known to us in the second manner; nothing in the first. Every thing is known to God in the first: and he has no need of knowing any thing in the second. As it would be absurd to say, that God receives ideas from external objects, so it is no less absurd to say either that the divine mind combines and abstracts ideas, or that complex and abstract ideas exist in it, or coexist with it, like so many incorporeal independent substances, by the contemplation of which God has, and Plato and his scholars assures us that men may have real knowledge.

These hypothetical reflections, on which I lay no more weight than they deserve, will serve at least to show, how little ought to be laid on those dogmas to which they are opposed.

If the Supreme Being does not know by the help of ideas, the chain of Dr. Cudworth's reasoning is broke in the first link of it; for there are then nó such eternal abstract ideas, either in or out of the supreme mind, as have been supposed: and all the incorporeal substances, with the verities clinging like ivy about them, that have been said to exist eternally and independently, neither exist, nor ever did exist, out of the imaginations of metaphysicians, those fruitful nurseries of phantastic science.

Should any one ask, like Cudworth, and the sixth objector to the metaphysical meditations of Des Cartes, at what time it was not yet actually true that a triangle has three angles equal to two right angles, or when it began to be true that twice four are eight? It would be a full and sufficient answer to say, that the time when neither these truths, nor the ideas from a comparison of which they result, did exist, was that wherein God had not yet created any intelligence whose manner of knowing was by the intervention of ideas and that these ideas began to exist when such intelligent beings were actually created. There never was a time when two and two were unequal to four. But there was we may conceive, a time when their equality did not exist because no numeral things existed, nor any mind to compare them except the Supreme mind; which, being assumed not to know by the help of ideas, can no more be said to compare than to perceive them, or to perform any operations about them. If he who made this answer was pressed by arguments drawn from the consequences of it, he would have at least the advantage of retorting arguments drawn from the consequences of the other hypothesis, and of showing that he, and those learned divines he opposed, were in a case very common to theists and atheists in their disputes. He had difficulties in his way: they had absurdities in theirs. He would own the difficulty of accounting for knowledge independently of ideas: but he would demonstrate the absurdity of maintaining that knowledge in God is depen-

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dent on ideas, and these ideas independent on him. He would have the further advantage of stopping his inquiries where the means of knowledge stop; of confessing his ignorance, and of preserving that awful respect for the Supreme Being which divines are apt, above all other men, to lose, by reasoning about his nature and his attributes, as well as his providence, in a style and manner that no other theist presumes to use, and to which they have no better pretence than that which the tailor gives them by making gowns for them, and coats for every one else.

Were men, even they who affect to examine like philosophers, and to investigate truth in all the recesses of it, less ignorant of that which is nearest to them, of themselves, and less liable to be blinded by their affections and passions, by the force of habit and the determining influence of self-interest; it would not be so easy as it is, to impose such high opinions of the human, aud such low opinions of the divine nature. In attempting the first, metaphysicians and divines run the risk of having the conscious knowledge of every man opposed to them; for every man knows, or may know, that the faculties of his mind, and his means of knowledge, are not such as they would persuade him that they are. Every man has reason to suspect, from the natural imperfections, from the accidental infirmities, from the sensible growth, maturity, and decay of that which thinks in him, and from its apparent dependence on the body, that his soul, whatever it be, has no affinity with the all-perfect Being. To maintain therefore an opinion of this affinity, the same persons have recourse to another method, from man, whom we can see, to God, whom we cannot see; from man, of whom we have intuitive, to God, of whom we have demonstrative knowledge alone, and which goes little further than a certainty of his existence, and of his infinite power and wisdom, but not so far as to reach his manner of existing, or his manner of knowing. The knowledge of men is confined to ideas. They cannot raise it higher in imagination, in their own, nor in that of other men. They try therefore to reduce the divine knowledge to their own low level, and, as strange as it is, it is true that they succeed.

Let them not succeed with you and me. This world, which is the scene of our action, is the scene of our knowledge: we can derive none that is real from any other, whatever intellectual worlds we may imagine. Let us consider then how it is constituted, in what relations we stand, to what ends we are directed. Let us trust to pure intellect a little less than we are advised to do, and to our senses a little more. When we have examined and compared the informations we receive from these, and have reasoned *à posteriori* from the works to the will of God, from the constitution of the system wherein we are placed by him to our

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interest and duty in it, we shall have laid the foundations of morality on a rock, instead of laying them on the moving sands, or the hollow ground, that metaphysics point out to us. Thus we shall know, as God designed we should know, and pursue, as far as our part extends, the plan of infinite wisdom. Instead of amusing ourselves vainly with a false sublime, let us keep soberly within the bounds of our nature; let us reason cautiously, pronounce modestly, practise sincerely, and hope humbly. To do this, is to be wise and good: and to be wise and good, is better far than to be a philosopher, a metaphysician, or even a divine.

The law of their nature, is the concern of all men alike. All men are, therefore, able alike to discover this law, and the constitution of things from which it is derived. All men do not discover it indeed alike, though all men, even the most savage and ignorant, have, as I believe, some imperfect notions of it, which observation and experience force into their minds. If there are any creatures of human figure, to whom even thus much cannot be ascribed, which I do not believe, they are ranked as improperly under the human species, as they would be if they had a different figure. Ignorance about the law of nature, like ignorance about many other truths, to which no man can refuse his assent when they are proposed to his understanding, is due to some or more of those many reasons, by which men are diverted from the pursuit of attainable knowledge, or stopped in it: and their errors, in this case, may be imputed, in some degree, to the same causes, as well as to affections, passions, and the force of custom. But philosophers, divines, and lawyers, who divest, or should divest themselves of affections and passions, and pay no regard to custom, run, by a contrary method, into a variety of contrary opinions, concerning one of the plainest and most important objects of our thoughts. The former stop short of that knowledge, which lies within the bounds of human comprehension. The latter overlook it, whilst they aim at knowledge that is unattainable; because it lies beyond the bounds of human nature, and therefore of human comprehension.

The notions on which Cudworth endeavors to ground eternal and immutable morality have prevailed much, with some difference in the representation of them, among ancient and modern theists. Let us mention two of the latter only, besides himself, Grotius and Clarke.

One would be tempted to think, that when these men assert the eternity, independency, and immutability of the great principles of the law of our nature, they mean all this comparatively only; comparatively with civil laws, which are novel, dependent on the will of man, and mutable at his pleasure. One might

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think it strange too, that they should not distinguish between the divine prescience, and the divine institution; or imagine a law, made for man, co-eternal with God. But their theological purpose in maintaining an opinion liable so many objections, and quite unnecessary to the establishment of our moral obligations on the firmest foundation, will appear in the course of these reflections. Divines, among whom the great lawyer we have mentioned has a just right to be reckoned, see far before them, and are determined in laying of principles by the consequences they intend to draw.

Puffendorf* is of a contrary opinion to Grotius. He censures very justly those who, like him, endeavor to join with God any coeval, extrinsical principle, which they assume that he was obliged to follow in assigning the forms and essences of things. He maintains, that the actions of men are perfectly indifferent, if you set aside the consideration of all law divine and human; that the morality of actions in a social creature, is derived from that social nature which God has been pleased to give him, and not from any immutable necessity; and he shows how ill those passages of Scripture, which Grotius quotes, are applied to prove an original law so truly common to God and man, that God permits himself to be judged according to it.

Clarke has, in our time, distinguished himself in defence of the doctrine we oppose. He has made it the first proposition, in his evidences of natural and revealed religion, with a magisterial air, and all the confidence of those men who talk on every occasion of nothing less than demonstration. "Fidenter sanè ut solent isti, nihil tam verens, quam ne dubitare aliqua de re videretur."† This proposition, however, on which he presumes to rest so important a cause, as on the angular stone of all religion, will appear to be absurd and inconsistent, when it is once analysed; and his proofs of it will appear to prove nothing, or to prove what is out of dispute. Thus I think: and if I think rightly, there is the more reason to demolish this false foundation, because it is as easy, as necessary, to lay one that is undeniably true.

The general absurdity and inconsistency of this proposition lies here. The demonstrator confounds in it two contrary propositions; and sliding, insensibly to many readers, from that which no reasonable man can admit, into that which every reasonable man must admit, he means nothing by a pomp of words, or he means to make the proofs of the latter pass for proofs of the former. He asserts, that necessary and eternal relations of

* Law of Nature and Nations, l. i, c. 2.

† Tully de Nat. Deor. Lib. i, speaking of Velleius the Epicurean.

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different things to one another, and the consequent fitness and unfitness of application of these things and of their relations, determine the will of God always and necessarily to choose to act only what is agreeable to justice, equity, goodness, and truth that is, to those abstract ideas, in order to the welfare of the whole universe. These expressions lead me, they cannot but lead me, to understand that the same doctrine is intended, as we have said no reasonable man, no good theist most certainly, can admit, the doctrine of eternal independent essences, as it has been taught. But the state of the question is changed at once; for, after asserting that all subordinate rational beings ought to determine their wills, and conduct their actions, by the same eternal rules by which God proceeds in governing, and therefore proceeded in creating, the world; the instances brought to prove it are all relative to our human state, and the rules are such as could be no rules antecedently to the existence of subordinate rational beings, and moral agents. Let us mention two or three of these instances. That God is infinitely superior to man, is as clear no doubt, as that infinity is larger than a point, or eternity longer than a moment. That men should worship and obey God, for I dare not use theological familiarity and talk of imitating God, is as fit, as it is true that they depend on him. In short, general benevolence, fidelity in particular compacts, and all the duties of natural religion, arise most evidently from a fitness of application of different things, and their different relations arising from the nature which God, according to his good pleasure, has bestowed upon us, and from that of the system which he has constituted, and wherein he has placed us. That God is superior to man, and that man ought to worship and obey God, are truths that have existed ever since there was such a rational creature as man to perceive them, and to stand in such a relation to God. That benevolence, fidelity, and every other moral obligation has existed likewise, ever since there was such a moral agent as man to be obliged by them, and to stand in such relations as we stand to one another. Is it not enough that we go as high as our nature, to discover the laws of it? To what purpose do we make that intricate by metaphysical abstractions, which God has made so extremely plain?

I might ask, to what purpose this kind of legerdemain is employed in reasoning? After Dr. Cudworth has talked dogmatically of eternal, immutable, independent natures, it comes out that he does not mean real natures, but the ideas that we frame of natures that we assume. Much in the same manner, after Dr. Clarke has talked, at least as dogmatically, of an eternal rule by which God has always acted necessarily, and of justice, equity, goodness, and truth, as of intelligible natures which have

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always existed, and agreeably to which God has always directed his conduct, he proceeds to talk of this very rule not as a rule eternally resulting from the eternal and independent differences of things and of their relations, but as a rule resulting from a system of beings whom God created in time, and from the relation in which he constituted them to himself and to one another. No man will deny, that a square is double to a triangle of equal base and height, from all eternity, if the doctor pleases, and rather than engage in such useless disquisitions: but every man of common sense will deny, that there could be a law of human nature before any such nature was in being. Clarke raises man first to act by the same rule, by which God made and governs the universe: and after that, he restrains infinite knowledge and wisdom to act by the same rule by which the creatures of God determine, or ought to determine, their wills, and according to the ideas that they derive from the contemplation of their own system of being, that is, of a small, and, doubtless, an inconsiderable part of the universe, not, by immense degrees, of the whole. "Quo teneam Protea nodo?" By the first we are bewildered in metaphysical abstractions, that have no tendency to promote morality; and by the last, divines obtain a latitude of making what hypotheses they please, and a pretence of reasoning with the same license about the designs and conduct of the living God, as they would take in reasoning about those of a dead, but not of a living monarch. This is the true theological secret: and I believe you will think it is so, when we come to consider Clarke's doctrine concerning the moral attributes of the Supreme Being, and the use he makes of it.

But to carry on the analysis of this first proposition. We are told in it, that these eternal and necessary differences of things, for such they are still called, cause it to be the duty of men, or lay an obligation upon them, to act according to this rule, separate from the consideration of the will of God, and from any expectation of reward, or fear of punishment, annexed either by natural consequence or by positive appointment. Now surely this must be thought a very odd method of promoting natural religion, and giving evidences of it, since it puts the atheist and the theist into the same case; and as rules were inconsistently jumbled together before, so characters are now. The atheist may have regard to natural differences alone, and to the consequences of acting or not acting according to them. He may see, that although human actions, considered merely as natural, and abstractedly from all relations, circumstances, and consequences, might be deemed absolutely indifferent, yet no human action can be so considered. The atheist, therefore, may think himself very truly under an obligation of interest, arising from the dif-

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ferent consequences of his actions, though he acknowledges no divine legislature; and he would laugh very justly at the man who should tell him, that he was not obliged to pass over the bridge, though he might be drowned in the torrent, because there was no act of Parliament for it. The theist indeed must think himself, in this respect, under an obligation of duty as well as interest. Whatever actions are naturally good or evil, must appear to him to be so morally. They derive their particular natures from the constitution of our system. They might not have been what they are, if this system had not been what it is, and this system could not have been what it is, if God, who made it, had not willed that it should be so. Nay, even on the supposition of eternal necessary differences, and independent natures, it would be still true that the will of God constitutes the obligation of duty. It would be false to assert, in the terms of this proposition, that the supposed eternal necessary differences of things constitute it alone. How independent soever we suppose the different natures of things to be, it depended most certainly on the will of God, who made the system, to introduce them into it as he thought fit. If he did not make, he assembled, he ordered them; and whatever obligation results from them, in this system, results from them, therefore, by his will, and is imposed by it. Once more, and to conclude this analysis. It is plainly false to assert, that men are obliged to observe the laws of nature on abstract considerations, and for reasons alone, of the same kind as those which determine them to agree about proportions or disproportions, in geometry and arithmetic. The advantages or disadvantages, annexed by natural consequence to the observation or breach of the law of nature, do certainly determine the atheist who observes it without believing a law in the strict sense of the word, but believing an obligation in the strictest: and it is manifest, that no other consideration can, nor, on his principles, ought to determine him. The theist is determined by the same advantages or disadvantages, still more strongly; because he looks on them as annexed, not only by natural consequence, but by positive and divine appointment. I speak of the theist as a philosopher only. If we considered him as a Christian, we should consider him under the influence of further and greater advantages or disadvantages, annexed by the same divine appointment. Thus the matter stands very clearly: and though men may puzzle it by playing with the words inducement, obligation, will of a superior, law, and others, they cannot alter the state of it.

Right reason consists in a conformity with truth, and truth in a conformity with nature. Nature, or the aggregate of things which are, is the great source from whence all the rivulets of

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real knowledge must be derived. When we cannot go up, and as far as we cannot go up thither, we must remain in ignorance, and we may be the more contented to remain so in several cases, because we go up in several to the spring head, or at least as far towards it, as the Author of all nature thought it necessary that creatures in our rank of being should go. It is a strong instance of the perversity of the human will, but it is true in fact, that men attempt often to go beyond nature, for no better a reason than this, because they cannot go up to it; or than this, because they do not find that to be, which imagination had told them might be. These men are metaphysicians, and by this method they have fallen at all times into error, or into something worse perhaps than error, but worse surely than ignorance, into doubt, perplexity, needless disquisitions, and endless disputation. Thus it has fared with the greatest scholars, and with men of the nicest discernment and acuteness, with Cudworth, for instance, and with Clarke. In all these cases, the safest side is that of ignorance: if he may be called ignorant, who keeps within the obvious bounds of nature and truth, and presumes to continue the pursuit of knowledge no further. Ignorance belongs more properly to him who is thought to know, whilst he transgresses these bounds, and calls every hypothesis a demonstration.

That the philosophers we have mentioned are guilty of this absurdity, has been shown; and it would not be hard to show, by many proofs, that whilst they pretend to establish morality, they do real injury to theism. They make the incomprehensible Being, in a certain sense, too comprehensible, and the knowledge of the all-perfect Being too nearly allied to the imperfection of the human.

Things are what they are by nature, not by will, says Cudworth. Would it not be more consistent with theism, to say, things are what they are by immutable natures, which the will of God has given them? Would it not be more within the bounds of human conception, and therefore more reasonable, to say, that God constituted these natures in constituting this system, than to assume that these natures, which are contained in our system, and to the knowledge of which we arrive no other way than by the gradual knowledge that we acquire of our system, are independent on it and on the God who made it?

The reason of things deduced from their differences, from their different relations, and from the different consequences of their applications, may be sufficient for the atheist. He may refer the whole to the powers and operations of something, he knows not what, but something self-existent and eternal, which he thinks fit to call the universe, or universal nature. The theist is not so content. The reason of things is to him that clue by

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which he conducts himself in discovering the existence of God, and the will of God, as far as man is an object of it. But the will of God is something less, and the reason of things is something more, in the esteem of such of these men as call themselves divines. An eternal reason of things, arising from their independent natures, and known to man as well as to God, is, according to these philosophers and divines, the true criterion of moral good and evil, the rule by which the Creator and the creature are obliged alike to act; with this difference, arising from the perfections of one and the imperfections of the other, God cannot act otherwise, man may. Is it not to be apprehended that men, tainted with such notions as these, will reason constantly *à priori*, and from them, down to their moral obligations: the consequence of which may be, that these obligations will become as unfixed and as fluctuating in their minds, as general and abstract ideas usually are? Is it not to be apprehended, that they will never condescend to reason *à posteriori*, and from the actual constitution of things, up to the will of God and the duty of man; the consequence of which would be to establish a rule of judgment concerning the great principles of moral obligations, as invariable as the obligations themselves?

These metaphysical divines are, for this reason, the more to be condemned, that, whilst they pretend to knowledge, that neither men nor angels, I presume, are capable of having, knowledge of divine ideas, and of the rule by which infinite wisdom governs, and whilst they would entice us by learned language, vague expressions, and false airs of demonstration, to seek the laws of our nature out of the scene of our nature, and beyond the reach of any clear conceptions we are able to have; this very law is enacted in all the works of God, promulgated in terms the most proportionable to human conception, and written in characters so plain, that he who runs may read them.

The great principles of moral truth are as much founded in the nature of things, as those of mathematical truth: and it is not a little less absurd to contradict the former by our words or actions, than to deny the latter. If the latter of these have an advantage in this respect, that the demonstrations of them are carried on with greater steadiness and precision, by the immediate and joint assistance of sense and intellect; the former have an advantage, for such it may be reckoned, of another kind. We perceive the truth of both with equal evidence; but as the former are much more important to us than the latter, we may be ignorant of all mathematical, we cannot be so of all moral truth. We discover one, the other discovers itself; it obtrudes itself on the mind, and the mind perceives it with greater satisfaction. He who demonstrates that the three angles of a triangle

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are equal to two right angles, or that a square is double to a triangle of equal base and height, has a dry inward complacency. But he who contemplates the obvious advantages of benevolence and justice to society, and of society to mankind, will feel a pleasure much more sensible: and the same proportion will hold in all the progress the mind makes to discover mathematical, and moral truth.

III.

If any man should advance, that we ought to proceed on the known principles of mathematics, not because there are such in nature, but because mathematicians have made an agreement or compact to proceed upon them as if there were such, I suspect that he would be esteemed mad. What then were Hobbes, his predecessors, and his successors, who affirmed that all distinction between moral good and evil, just and unjust, is established solely by civil institution; and that our moral obligations are derived from the laws of society, not from the law of nature? This extravagant system has been over and over refuted by many writers of our own and other countries. Some reflections, such as my first thoughts suggest to me, I too will bestow upon it. They shall not be long, and whether they are new or no, they shall not be copied from any one. It seems then to me, that civil societies could not have been formed, nor the distinction of just and unjust, nor the honestum and decorum of life have been established, if there had not been, antecedently, such a law of nature as Hobbes denies, and directly opposite to that which he supposes. Your great predecessors, Amphion and Orpheus, would have strung their lyres to little purpose, if there had not been a corresponding unison in the human constitution. The letter of the fable would have proved true, as soon as the moral of it; stones would have leaped into order, and have built themselves into walls; tigers and wolves would have grown tame, and have formed peaceful societies, as soon as men, if there had not been a law of nature peculiar to man; there was therefore such a law. We may consider man, in a state of nature, as an artless, but we must consider him, in no state, as an irrational creature: and to have been such a creature as Hobbes represents him, he must have been rather irrational than artless. The proof that this philosopher brings to show that man is made by discipline, that is, the discipline of civil or political government, and not by nature, fit for society, is a strange one indeed. He says, that "Societies are confederacies," which is true in a proper sense: "That the force of

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the conventions by which they are framed is unknown to children and illiterate people, and the utility of them to those who never experienced the evils that arise from the want of society —that it is manifest therefore (all men being born children) that all men are born unfit for society, and that many, perhaps the greatest number, remain some how or other unfit for it as long as they live; that all these, however, the adult as well as infants, have the human nature;" and from hence he draws the conclusion I have mentioned. Now for those who never experienced the evils that men are exposed to out of society, it is enough to say that they feel, and must feel, without the help of this contrast, unless they are idiots, the benefits of society; and for the rest, his argument is no better than this would be: All men are born infants, infants have not the use of speech, some men are born dumb, and have it not during their whole lives; men are therefore by their nature incapable, or unfit to speak. If men were at any time, for years or ages, in that state of war and confusion which Hobbes assumes to be their natural state, it would not follow that every one had, by nature, a right to do what every one had, by particular circumstances and contingency of events, the power to do. It would only follow, that instinct determines sooner, and appetite and passion more strongly, than reason. It would only follow, that the spring of human nature exerted its force, before the balance, which is designed to control and regulate the impulses of it, was put into activity, as it must be, according to the same nature, by time and experience. But the case assumed has no pretence to be admitted; neither is it possible to conceive, on any supposition, such a state of mankind as the philosopher of Malmesbury had figured to himself. However you suppose the human race to have begun, societies, little indeed, but societies still, must have been coeval with it. If there was a first man and a first woman, they and their children (for these could not nurse and educate themselves) must have constituted a first society. If numbers of men and women sprung out of the earth at once, there might be some contests among the men about these primitive ladies, and some violence might be employed, and some confusion might arise, in the immediate hurry of copulation. But after that, the same instinct, which had caused variance, would have formed societies. Families would have been soon raised, and the authority, subordination, order, and union, necessary to their well being, must have followed naturally, as we may observe that they do among the most savage people. Men never were, because they could never subsist, in a state of absolute individuality. Self-love, directed by instinct to mutual pleasure, made the union of man and woman. Self-love made

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that of parents and children. Self-love begat sociability; and reason, a principle of human nature, as well as instinct, improved it. Reason improved it, extended it to relations more remote, and united several families into one community, as instinct had united several individuals into one family. Reason performed this by the help of experience: and what is the effect of experience? It is not to make any thing new in nature, it is to discover what was in nature, though unobserved before. We might say as truly, that Columbus discovered a new world, in the absolute as well as relative sense of the word, as to say with Hobbes, that when men distinguished between just and unjust, and made laws and institutions on that distinction, they made that to be just or unjust which was indifferent before. The natural obligation to exercise benevolence, to administer justice, and to keep compacts, is as evident to human reason, as the desire of happiness is agreeable to human instinct. We desire by instinct, we acquire by reason. The natural desire leads us necessarily to the natural obligation: and we proceed, in this case, from intuitive to demonstrate knowledge, by the same sure steps, by which we proceed from the knowledge of our own, to that of God's existence. The law of nature, or of right reason, is the real original of all positive laws. Such it appeared to Tully.* "Ergo est lex," says he, "justorum injustorumque distinctio ad illam antiquissimam et rerum omnium principem expressa naturam, ad quam leges hominum diriguntur." As the civil laws derive their authority from a conformity to this original, so it is their real, or supposed tendency to the same end that induces men to submit to them. Tully† shall support my opinion again. It is certain, according to him, that they who gave laws to mankind "populis ostendisse se ea scripturos atque laturos, quibus illi adscriptis susceptisque honestè beatèque viverent."‡

* De Leg. Lib. ii. † Ibid.

‡ Though I would not take Tully for my guide in matters of the first philosophy, yet his opinions are often true, and his authority is always of weight, if not to determine, yet to confirm us, on such subjects as these. It does so very reasonably in the notions that are advanced, and implied in this paragraph. They who assume that the will of a superior can alone constitute obligation, do really stifle, and mistake too grossly; since not only a moral obligation may exist without a law, but a law may be such as to create no moral obligation. When we speak of moral obligations, either we mean nothing, or we mean that we are tied, bound, and under an internal, that is, a moral necessity of conforming ourselves to those rules which are expressed in the constitution of our nature, and on the observance of which the happiness of our kind depends. Reason is in this case the obliger. A rational creature is the obliged; and he is so obliged as no law, made by mere will, can of itself oblige. The mere will of a legislator may constrain, may force,

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Let it not be said that men have been sometimes seduced, and sometimes forced to receive the will of other men for law; that this has been done without any regard to the law of nature, and might have been done just as effectually on the supposition of no such law. Reason will tell us, that it cannot; and experience that it has not been so done whatever appearances may have struck those who do not look far enough back to the causes of things. Men are not attracted by sounds or odors, nor hived like bees; and, far from submitting to civil laws made by mere will, they have submitted to these, that they might not be governed by mere will. That fraud and force hold men in subjection, I do not deny, the first principally to ecclesiastical, and both to civil tyranny. But this I deny, that fraud and force were sufficient of themselves, and the true, sole, and original means of submitting men to such tyranny.

I shall not speak here of religious tyranny, the first, and with respect to the authority it profanes, the most audacious offspring of fraud. Enough has been said on that subject in another Essay. Here I confine myself to civil institutions and civil government alone, and I rest astonished at the strange perversion of reason in those men, who make the abuse of natural law, as far as they can, pass for the original of all law. Could the fraud, or, if you will soften the terms, the art of legislators have imposed originally for laws the dictates of mere will? Certainly not. Mere will would have revolted mankind from them, if it had appeared to be such: and it would have appeared to be such, if there had not been, in the nature of things and in the reason of man, a law which sometimes gave, and always seemed to give a sanction to their laws. What therefore could fraud do, or has fraud done, in this respect? Nothing more than this. When reason and experience determined men to walk in those paths which the law of nature points out, and which lead to the

may create an outward, a physical necessity, but this necessity implies no obligation; and if king lords and commons had enacted, that when parents lived to the age of fourscore their children should put them to death, you would not have thought yourself under an obligation of putting your old mother to death. In short, human laws are in a first consideration nothing more than the dictates of will, the will of a legislator, enforced by superior power; and in a second, they may acquire, or not acquire the right of obliging, as they have the power of forcing. But this order is inverted in the divine law of nature. The moral necessity of acting agreeably to it, in order to secure that happiness which we are determined irresistibly to desire, is a first consideration, and is alone sufficient to create obligation. In discovering this law we are led to discover the legislator, and will is added to invest obligation with all the forms of law, the will of that Being who constituted the obligation when he made the human system, and who, by constituting the obligation, made and promulgated the law.

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happiness of their kind; fraud, like an unfaithful guide, led them insensibly into others. Nature directed them to unite in societies, and to submit to civil laws, for their common utility. Fraud betrayed them into the tyranny of mere will, and when various institutions and various customs had made them lose sight of the law of their nature, it was not hard to persuade them that the dictates of will, designed for particular not common utility, and even repugnant to this law, were deduced from it. Thus again, as to force. When absolute power is once established, it may impose arbitrary will for law. It cannot make things just or unjust, nor create natures, that existed before government itself. But as they were ill observed then, they may be ill defined now, in particular instances. The unjust may pass for what it is in some cases, and be decreed just in others: and thus, civil laws, not only may, but do very frequently, confound the distinction that nature has made, the very distinction which is so falsely ascribed to their sole authority. But whatever absolute power does when it is established, how could it be established originally, and in a state of nature like that which is supposed? Absolute power must have been acquired by superior force, and superior force by superior numbers. Still the question will return, how were these superior numbers collected in one interest, and under one direction? They could not be so originally by force; for force supposes them, and is derived from them. Hercules might have travelled with his club in his hand, from the east to the west: his club might have destroyed here and there a monster, but would have formed a society no where. Nothing but consent can form originally collective bodies of men. Nothing but consent, therefore, to which men are determined by the sociability of their nature, by an antecedent law, could have raised an army, or created that force by which it is assumed that all laws, those we call civil and those we call natural, were alike imposed on mankind.

On the whole, as fast as families united in larger societies, and the same plain and simple rules, the first rudiments of natural law, that had been sufficient under paternal government, were so no longer, but required greater extension and a greater variety of application. Philosophers and legislators arose, constituted governments, and made laws wisely and unwisely, agreeably and disagreeably to the nature of things, according to the general imperfection of human productions: but there would have been no societies to whom laws might be given, no pretence to give them, no disposition to receive them, if there had not been a primeval law, a law by which the families of men were governed in that state which we commonly call a state of nature, and which laid the principles of future government in another

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state, to which they were advancing gradually. This primeval law is that code wherein all the laws, to which God has subjected his human creatures, are contained. Civil laws are the glosses which sometimes explain and sometime perplex it, which men make, and men may alter at their will; whilst the other remains immutable like that of God. Hobbes seems to admit this primeval law, and to give up his own doctrine in that place of his book "De Cive," where he speaks to this effect, for I quote here upon my memory, "that men were obliged to enter into compacts to preserve one another, and to seek peace wherever it could be had, in order to prevent the mischief and desolation which would attend his imaginary state of nature." Now if some things were fit to be prevented, some things were unfit to be done, in the supposed state of nature; from whence it follows, that the distinction between just and unjust was made before governments were instituted, or legislators made it, which the same Mr. Hobbes denies.

I conclude my reflections by observing, that the whole hypothesis seems to be raised on three great mistakes. It considers man, in the state of nature, under the direction of his appetites alone, and going out of that state as soon as he begins to exercise his reason; although Hobbes says, inconsistently enough on some occasions, that right reason is the rule of human actions, even antecedently to civil laws. But to think rightly of man in this very state, we ought to consider him under the actual direction of all his natural faculties, of his reason as well as his appetites, of his reason artless indeed and untutored by experience, but therefore undebauched likewise, and in all cases sufficient to demonstrate to him the first general and obvious principles on which the happiness of his kind is built, and to which he is plainly and strongly directed by the necessities of his nature. In the next place, this hypothesis considers each man as an individual, no more a member of the great commonwealth of mankind than of any particular commonwealth; it supposes him to have a right to every thing, and to be a rival and enemy on that account to every other man; whereas it is not more evident that we are born to walk with our legs, and to handle things with our hands, than it is that we are born to assist, and to be assisted by one another. It is not more plain that each man cannot enjoy every thing, than it is that each man has not an unlimited right to enjoy every thing, or that the right of each man where things are common, is limited by his real wants. It did not require more sagacity to discover these truths in a state of nature, than it did to reason and to act as unnaturally as mankind must have done in a perpetual round of jealousy, precaution, and design, according to their plan of life, such as Hobbes had imagined

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it. In the next and last place, this hypothesis confounds the ideas of original laws, and of laws made to explain and renew these. It does this unnecessarily too, unless we suppose this philosopher to have been so absolutely an atheist, that he was forced by his system to ascribe the obligation of all law to man and not to God: for nothing can be better founded, nor more consequential, in the reason of all those who acknowledge such a being than this opinion, that the author of all nature, having given to his different creatures different natures, according to the different purposes for which they were designed in the scheme of his providence, and every one of these natures including its own peculiar law, whether that of instinct or that of reason, the most rational of his human creatures established from time to time rules of conduct and government conformable to it, and which are in particular instances so many republications of it. To use an obvious and familiar example; the same rights of Englishmen, which were settled by the great charter, have been enacted over again by many particular laws. Would Mr. Hobbes have dated these rights, if he had admitted them, from these later laws? He would not most certainly.

To conclude, therefore, nothing of this kind candeserve our attention more, because nothing can contribute more to keep us within the golden mean of truth, than to observe the strange extremes into which philosophers are carried, by presumption, by an affectation of singularity, and by other motives, little less inexcusable, though in appearance more plausible. Thus they are carried in the instance before us some to set the principles of morality out of our sight and their own too, whilst they assume them to be derived from eternal natures, independent on the will of God; some, to lay these principles as much too low, as low as the level of human policy, whilst they assume them to be nominal natures, dependent on the will of man; some to insist that God wills we should follow, in our moral conduct, the same eternal rule which he follows himself, in the government of the universe; and some, to affirm, that far from having any rule at all, every thing is indifferent in its nature, and man by nature a lawless savage.

IV.

After censuring these extremes it becomes proper to inquire, a little more particularly, what the truth is which lies between them, how the laws of nature develope themselves to the human understanding, how self-love leads to sociability, and the most confined principle extends itself to be that which connects the

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whole race of mankind. But before I say any thing further on these subjects, I must give some answer to a query which our good friend the B. of C. makes. The query is this, "Whether there is any absurdity in supposing that man should imitate the author of nature, so far as he is able?" This is said to be "not only agreeable to the Christian plan, but also to that of the Stoics." See Balbus, in Tully de Nat. Deorum.

In answer to this query, I confess and think myself obliged in conscience to confess, that I hold it to be absurd, and worse than absurd to assert, that man can imitate God, except in a sense so very remote, and so improper that the expression should never be used, and much less such a duty be recommended. Divines have distinguished, in their bold analysis, between God's physical and his moral attributes, for which distinction, though I see several theological, I do not see one religious purpose that is necessary to answer. But the distinction once made by their supreme authority, though they admit that we cannot imitate God in the exercise of the former, they insist that we can, and ought to imitate him in the exercise of the latter; and to complete this proof, that consists of affirmation rather than argument, they maintain, at least Clarke* does so very premptorily, that the divine moral attributes, that is, holiness, goodness, justice, righteousness, and truth, are the very same in God as they are in our ideas. Nay, he adds, that God, out of a tender and hearty concern for the happiness of man, (strange words to be applied to the Supreme Being!) desires to be imitated by him in those perfections, which are the foundation of his own unchangeable happiness.

When they distinguish thus between the physical and moral attributes, it is plain that they see how absurd they would appear, if they proposed to creatures, conscious of their corporeal and mental weakness, to imitate, even so far as they are able or in any degree, infinite power and wisdom; which would be a ridiculous mimickry, not a real imitation. When they propose this imitation of the moral attributes, they flatter themselves that the ridicule will be less liable to observation. These attributes are less so, and they can make by the help of their precarious metaphysical and logical reasonings, such representations of them as may seem to render them imitable by man. But they would do well to consider, that if the moral attributes were demonstrated by arguments *à priori*, and they are not so even by them, to be the same in God as they are in our ideas, yet this general assurance would be far from making

* Evid. p. 116.

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them objects of human imitation. To be such they must be known *à posteriori* like his physical attributes; for we can have no knowldege of either, except that which sense and experience give us. They must be discerned in the works of God, and in the conduct of his providence; and it is evident that they are not, cannot be so discerned in them as to be proper objects of our imitation. The divine attributes are exercised in such innumerable relations absolutely unknown to us; that though we are sure the exercise of them, in the immensity of the universe, is always directed by the all-perfect Being to that which is fittest to be done on the whole; yet the notions of created beings who see them in one relation alone, like us, cannot be applied to them with any propriety, nor with any certainty sufficient to make them objects of their imitation. This is so true, that in many cases we should act in direct contradiction to the law of our nature, if we should make the conduct of Divine Providence the rule of ours. God makes his sun to rise upon the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust. He involves the innocent with the guilty in great calamities: and there is no theme on which divines enlarge more pathetically than on the unjust distribution of good and evil, when they join with the Atheists, though for different purposes, in one common cry. Are these appearances, however constant some and however frequent others of them may be, to stand as objects that we are to imitate in our moral conduct? I think no man will say that they are, except those who have so little regard to consistency that they propose the first to our imitation, whilst they aggravate the two last to such a degree, that they assume the justice and goodness of God's dispensations in this system, to be capable of no other vindication than that which supposes another. These writers and preachers therefore must mean, when they exhort us to imitate God, not the God whom we see in his works, and in all that his providence orders or permits, but the God who appears in their representations of him, and who is often such a God as no pious theist can acknowledge.

When Balbus, since Balbus is cited on this occasion, endeavors to prove the world a wise being and a God, he says, speaking after Chrysippus, "ipse autem homo ortus est ad mundum contemplandum et imitandum." He is born to do this, so far as he is able; for the world is perfect, and he is only "quædam particula perfecti." He has only a participation, our divines would say, of the divine perfections. Further on, the same Balbus, being to prove that the world is governed by the providence of the gods, assumes that the gods must be "non solùm animantes sed etiam rationis compotes," and that they must live

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together in a sort of civil society, governing the world like one common republic or city. From hence it follows, he says, that there is the same reason, the same truth, and the same law of right and wrong "utrobique," both in God and man. The wisdom, the reason, the prudence of the gods are greater indeed, though of the same kind; and since these are employed by them in "maximis et optimis rebus," they must be employed of necessity in the government of the world; because nothing can be greater nor better than the world, "nec majus, nec melius mundo." These are all the passages I recollect, where Balbus speaks of any thing pertinent to the present question; and I cannot find any thing in them that is favorable to the doctrine taught by Platonic and Christian divines, about our obligation to imitate God. I am sorry to find too, that this doctrine is more extravagant than the extravagances of the Stoics. To maintain that the material world is a divine animal, a wise being, and a god, is blasphemous and absurd. But to say that man is born to contemplate, and imitate the world, may admit of a very good sense, with a little interpretation; since it may be made to signify, what it would be better to express plainly, that man is born to contemplate the world, and to conform his behaviour to the will of God, that is manifested, relatively to man, in the constitution of it. Thus the doctrine of Balbus may receive a reasonable interpretation, which, I am sure, that of Clarke and other Christian divines cannot; and, besides, it will afford as much pathetic matter "per la predica" with the advantage of being true, as the other, which, however piously intended or heard, is false and profane.

The man, who neglects the duties of natural religion and the obligations of morality, acts against his nature, and lives in open defiance to the author of it. God declares for one order of things, he for another. God blends together the duty and interest of his creature; his creature separates them, despises the duty, and proposes to himself another interest. He, who acts in a conformity to the nature of things, carries on the system of God, and co-operates with him; and surely to put the system of divine wisdom in execution, and to co-operate with the Creator, is honor enough for the creature. Thus we may attain to the perfection of our nature, and by pretending to no more, we may do it real honor: whereas, by assuming that we imitate God, we give the strongest proof of the imperfection of our nature, whilst we neglect the real, and aspire vainly at a mock honor; as pride, seduced by adulation, is prone to do; and as religious pride, wrought up by self conceit into enthusiasm, does above all others. They who encourage and flatter this pride, like Clarke, are a sort of eunomians, and boast, like the founder

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of that sect, and the fast friend of the Arians, that they know God as well as he knows himself.

Heathen divines were very far from having the same presumption. The gods they pretended to know were inmates in one great house with men, or fellow citizens of one great city. Such gods they might pretend to know, and to imitate too. But we shall not find that those of them, who acknowledged, besides these inferior, generated gods, one supreme ungenerated Being, presumed to claim any such intimate acquaintance with him. On the contrary, they supposed him to be above all human conception, and therefore above all human imitation. He did not stand, in their ideas of him, even in the relation to man of creator or governor, except he might be said to stand mediately, through these inferior divinities, in that relation; and thus we have another instance of the strange extremes into which philosophers run. These extremes would be avoided, if they could content themselves to know God, as he has thought fit to be known by them; and why are they not, divines especially, so content? He appears in his works, and by easy deductions from our knowledge of them, to be the first, self-existent, intelligent cause of all things, a Being of infinite wisdom and power, and therefore an object, to all rational creatures, not of curiosity but of awe, of reverence, of adoration, of gratitude, of obedience and resignation. To what purpose then do divines contend to make him an object of human imitation, by deductions from his nature and attributes, independently of his works, by which alone they can have the little, inadequate, general, but sufficient knowledge of his nature and attributes that has been mentioned? Do they hope to carry theism, and the obligations of natural religion further, by nice metaphysical speculations, hard to understand, and inconclusive when they are understood, than by those obvious proofs which God has proportioned to the comprehension of every man? I conclude therefore my answer to this query, by asking, in my turn, our excellent friend, whether the doctrine of imitating God, even so far as we are able, does not tend to draw men off unnecessarily, and, if I may say so, wantonly, from real knowledge, into those abstractions that have led so many to confound the divine and the human nature, to imagine an uninterrupted scale of intelligence from man up to God, to flatter themselves with notions, not only of imitating him, but of being united to him, and to invent or adopt, in the licentiousness of imagination, all that metaphysical and mystical blasphemy which has passed for the most sublime theology.

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V.

What has been said in answer to the query about imitating God, is not remote from the subject we are upon, though it may seem a digression, since it tends to lay the principles of natural law on their true foundation. All that can be said, to any real and useful purpose, concerning this law, is extremely plain. It lies too in a very narrow compass: and yet what volumes have been written, what disputes have arisen, about it; whilst men have been, as authors are commonly, much more intent to show their learning or acuteness, than to set their subject in a clear and sufficient light. A superfluous glare not only tires, but offusques, the intellectual sight; and of this there are examples to be found. But the writers I speak of here, seem oftener to do like the schoolmen, of whom my Lord Bacon says very wittily and justly, that instead of setting up a light sufficient to enlighten a large room, they go about with a small taper, and, whilst they illuminate one corner, darken the rest. He says very truly, that they break the solidity of science by the minuteness of their questions; and, we may add as truly, that the learned persons I intend here, of both sorts, puzzle and perplex the plainest thing in the world; sometimes by citations little to the purpose, or of little authority; sometimes by a great apparatus of abstract reasoning, and by dint of explanation. Read Selden, read Grotius, read Cumberland, read Puffendorf, to mention no others, if you have leisure and patience for it: and after you have done so, I will appeal to you for the truth of the judgment I make. There are many curious researches, no doubt, and many excellent observations in these writers; but they seem to be great writers on this subject by much the same right, as he might be called a great traveller, who should go from London to Paris by the Cape of Good Hope.

Among all the trifling questions, that have been raised concerning the law of nature, none is more trifling than the cavil made at the very expression. It is futile and pedantic, and would not deserve of itself even the little notice that I have taken of it occasionally. But the ill consequence of admitting it, with respect to the original and universal obligation of the law, makes it deserve refutation. Hobbes used the term, though he denied the thing. His point of view was to derive all law from the authority of the civil magistrate; and therefore, though he acknowledged right reason to be the rule, he would not allow it to be the law, of human actions. But the instances he brings in proof are nothing to the purpose. The laws of nature, taught

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by philosphers in their writings, are not, therefore, written laws, nor are the writings of lawyers such, for want of a supreme authority, "ob defectum auctoritatis summæ." No doubt they are not. But if they are conformable to the nature of things, they have an authority superior to Hobbes's supreme authority. Though philosophers and lawyers collected them, God made them, and civil laws themselves have no real, no intrinsical authority distinct from this. Nay, an avowed atheist might indulge us in the use of this term, like Hobbes, whether he was one or no, though some divines will not; for the rule of right reason must appear evident to him, if he reflects at all on the nature of things, and not the rule alone, but the happiness or unhappiness of mankind, consequent to the observation or the breach of it: all which together, he must own, would amount to a law, if he could bring himself to acknowledge a lawgiver; and comes very near it, however, in a large but proper sense. How should it not, when we collect this double sanction from the same nature from whence we collect the rule?

Selden, much more orthodox than Hobbes, in his first book "De Jure Nat. et Gent. juxta Dis. Ebræor." where he treats this matter with that profusion of learning which he pours forth on every occasion, agrees that the principles of natural law were discovered by the right use of reason. But, after this, he endeavors to show, from the different and contrary placets of philosophers, as well as institutions of legislators, that reason cannot frame such an uniform stated rule of right and wrong as this has been represented, nor much less a law without a legislative authority: and he concludes, as every theist must, and as the Jews did, that God, who made the law of nature, published it originally, and publishes it constantly to men. Now that God made the law, is certain; that he gave it, and still gives it "perpetua indicatione," is no less certain: but the manner in which he gave, and continues to give it, according to the Jews, is very far from being so. It is a rhapsody of assumed fact, and of superstitious and enthusiastical notions, common to them, to several heathen philosophers, to Christian fathers, to scholastic divines, to Mahometan doctors, and Arabian metaphysicians. To lay the foundation of the law of nature on such vain hypotheses, is to make the most important of human concerns ridiculous, the most distinct and clearest ideas confused and obscure, and, in a word, to hinder us from seeing truth itself in a clear light.

God gave the law of nature, according to the rabbinical doctrine, by word of mouth to Adam first, and to Noah afterwards; and the great principles of it were contained in the seven articles, that are called "septem præcepta Noachidarum," by whom they mean not Noah and his immediate offsprings alone; but the

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whole race of mankind. How the last of these laws "de membro animalis viventis non comedendo," came to be given to Adam, if it was not lawful to eat any flesh, as they say it was not in the antediluvian world, is not easily explained. We may therefore suppose that they did not mean to include this article among the precepts given to Adam, though an inconsistency never stopped the Talmudists, and though the rabbins blundered daily through many that are as obvious as this. The distinction they make between themselves and all other people, with respect to the divine communication of this law, is a little more intelligible. As they were descendants of Noah, this law was given to them in common with all men; and since there was no written law before Moses, their patriarchs themselves could have no other moral law than this tradition. But then, as they were a chosen people, selected and separated from the rest of mankind, God gave them, by his servant Moses, a peculiar law; and thus they stood distinguished from the rest of the Noachidæ, whom they called the nations; as the Greeks had the folly to call every man a barbarian who was not a Greek, and as even the modern Italians, to say nothing of the old Romans, have sometimes given the same appellation even to the most civilised of their neighbors.

Another way, by which, according to the same rabbinical doctrine, the law of nature was and is communicated to man by God, is that of immediate or mediate inspiration, in opposition to mere rational faculties and operations. I call it inspiration, because the Jews imagined an "intellectus agens," or active spirit, by the influence or illumination of which, and in concurrence with which, the human understanding is made capable of knowing, not only the laws of nature, but all the other principles of science, and deductions of reason, which are the objects of it. This "intellectus agens" is sometimes, and to them, God himself, by a particular prerogative belonging to their nation, "ex prerogativâ gentis." To other men it is the minister of God, that illuminates their minds, like an intellectual sun, by a force and with an authority derived from God. It was in the first way, no doubt, that Abraham discovered by philosophical meditation, in the midst of idolatry, the existence of the one true God: and, to say the truth, the Jews should be, by virtue of this prerogative, the most enlightened and the most knowing people on earth; whereas they seem to have been in all ages the very reverse; before their captivity, indocile and ignorant; after it, credulous and bigot, little curious of the real, much addicted to the imaginary sciences that were cultivated by other nations.

They entertained the notion of this second kind of inspiration later than that of the first, "juxta disciplinam recentiorem," says

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Selden: and it is no wonder that they did so. They had been used to think, that the divine presence resided amongst them, and that they consulted God by their high priest; that he spoke immediately to their prophets, and exercised his power immediately in the conduct of their affairs. But afterwards, though he was near them still, he was not so near them; and mediate inspiration to illuminate their minds became necessary. Besides, it was not till after their captivity that a more refined philosophy, and notions more metaphysical than any they had had before, began to be introduced among them, whilst they lived under the Seleucidæ and the Ptolemys, in ages when the first philosophy was growing up to that pitch of enthusiasm and madness at which it arrived in the school of Alexandria, and wherever the doctrines of the latter Pythagoricians and Platonicians prevailed. From hence, I suppose, it has happened, that this dogma of the rabbins bears so near a resemblance to the opinions of the Greek, and, in imitation of them, of the Arabian metaphysicians, who confounded together, with more difference of expression than of meaning, if any of them can be said properly to have had a meaning, the divine, and human reason. But however all this may have been, the rabbins assert that the divine illuminating presence, by which alone men are able to discover the law of nature, illuminated chiefly the descendants of Seth and of Sem, till the days in which the law was given by Moses, when seven other prophets only arose among the nations; and that from this era the divine illumination has seldom shone on any persons except themselves. So that, on this hypothesis, no great improvement has been made in the sciences since the days of Moses, except by the Jews.

I have drawn this sketch from Selden, in order to contrast the extravagancy of these notions, which are derived from a true principle, that the law of nature is the law of God, with those of Hobbes, which are founded on this false principle, that the laws of nature are the laws of civil magistrates: and I conclude upon the whole, that we shall do much better to trust ourselves than such masters, who lead us into error about the origin of natural law, or about the means of arriving at the knowledge of it. One makes the origin independent on God, and some divines do little less. Another makes the means of arriving at the knowledge independent on man, and above the strength of his natural reason; though the author of nature has been graciously pleased to proportion them one to the other. If these doctrines are hurtful in different respects, many words and much time are spent about others very little necessary, about abstract notions of moral entities, and about the causes of moral truth, concerning which we may easily fall into error (whilst we can fall into

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none concerning the great principles of it) unless we have the light of that nature to which our search is directed. The philosopher may, because he does this; I had almost said must; but the man of common sense cannot err about these principles, though he may remain in ignorance about some of them, for want of industry or opportunity to discover them all.

VI.

Let us take things then as we find them, more curious to know what is, than to imagine what may be. Let us turn our eyes on ourselves, and consider how we are made. We shall not find either the immediate or mediate illumination, that is supposed to come to us from without, and independently on which it is supposed that the human mind can exercise no act of intelligence: but we shall find, that there is such a thing as natural reason implanted in us by the author of our nature, whose progress and operations are known to us intuitively, and by the help of which we are able to acquire, not only moral, but every other human science.

Experience and observation require time; and reason that collects from them, and is improved by them, comes slowly to our assistance. It would come too slowly, and want much of the power it has, weak and imperfect as that is, to regulate the conduct of human life, if the all-wise creator had not implanted in us another principle, that of self-love, which is the original spring of human actions, under the direction of instinct first, and of reason afterwards. The first direction is common to all animals, even to those that microscopes alone can make visible to the eye. The second we say is peculiar to man, and so we may say properly enough, whether we conceive this faculty in man and beast to be wholly different in kind, or whether we conceive it to be vastly transcendent in man.

"Homo animans quidem est," Grotius speaks,* "sed eximium animans, multòque longiùs distans a cæteris omnibus, quam cæterorum genera inter se distant." I do not take this proposition to be entirely true. It is impossible to observe the rest of the animal kind, and not discern, in many of them, certain actions and rules of conduct that denote not only a more extensive and surer instinct than we are conscious of, but something that appears rather a lower degree of reason, than a higher degree of instinct; if we are able by observation alone, and without any communication of their ideas, to distinguish so accurately. In

* De Jure Bel. et Pac. Proleg.

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all cases, and in what manner soever it has been ordered by infinite wisdom, there would be no difficulty in refuting, by particular facts, the general assertion of Grotius, nor in showing that the difference in this respect, between some men and some other animals, is naturally less than that between different species of animals, and even between animals of one species, between man and man at least. Superior beings, who look down on our intellectual system, will not find, I persuade myself, so great a distance between a Gascon petit maitre and a monkey, or a German philosopher and an elephant, whatever partiality we may have for our own species, as they will find between those men who are born to instruct, and those who are born incapable of instruction. Grotius might have allowed other animals much more intelligence than he did; though he allows them in a note, and on the authority of Philo and others, a little more than in his text. What the authorities of ancient authors signify in a matter so notorious, and so much within the observation of every age, I know not. But I know still less what he means, when he says, "quod in illis quidem procedere credimus ex principio aliquo intelligente extrinseco, quia circa actus alios istis neutiquam difficiliores par intelligentia in illis non apparet." If he had said from an inward principle, "ex principio intrinseco," as he has been made to say in some editions, he would have been intelligible, and would have meant very plainly a directing instinct, or a reasoning faculty, much inferior to that of man, and variously implanted in the animal kind, to direct their actions to their different ends: but this would have been inconsistent with his argument, and he would have contradicted himself. He said therefore "ex principio extrinseco:" and what could he mean by that? An outward force that impels or restrains them, and directs their conduct occasionally, but not uniformly? This would be too absurd. Could he mean that immediate or mediate illumination from above, which the rabbins speak of, and suppose that animals receive from thence the intelligence they want, in certain cases, to fulfil the law of their nature; whilst they are left destitute of any intelligence, in others? This would be still more absurd. Might it not be deemed profane too among those, who fear to prostitute the divine action, as men who make hypotheses in theology and philosophy are apt to do?

The surest way of avoiding such absurdities is to be neither dogmatical, nor even over curious: and there is the less temptation to be either, on this subject, because the principles of the obligation of natural law, as far as we are concerned to know them, are extremely obvious. Instinct precedes reason in man. It supplies the want, or the imperfection of it in other animals. should we venture to refine a little further on appearances, we

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might guess, that as the reason of man grows up out of habitual instinct, by experience and observation, so does that faculty, which I fear we must call by the same name in beasts. Some of these have instinct and reason far above others; and man has reason far above them all: because though they have senses more acute than men very often, and several, perhaps, of which we have no ideas; yet the very contrary is true as to mental faculties, which are plainly less imperfect, and more numerous, in us than in them. They perceive ideas both simple and complex that come in by the senses, and they retain them too, as we do.—That they compare these ideas, in some degree, is certain. How far they compound them, by any intellectual operation, I much doubt. But this seems to be out of doubt, that they want totally the great instrument of human knowledge. I do not say abstraction, which I take to be, as it is understood, a mere "ens rationis," and to deny them which, is to deny them nothing; but I mean the wide-extended power of generalising the ideas they have, without which there can be no ratiocination, nor knowledge sufficient to constitute moral agents.

As divines have impudently, and wickedly, assumed (give me leave to use on this occasion, which deserves it if any can, the style they employ on every dispute,) that there is a law of right reason common to God and man; so lawyers have advanced, most absurdly, that the law of nature is common to man and beast. "Jus naturale est," say the compilers of the digest, "quod natura omnia animalia docuit. Nam jus istud non humani generis proprium, sed omnium animalium," etc.

That the history and law of Moses is favorable to this opinion likewise, and that beasts, as well as men, are represented and treated therein as accountable creatures, must not be denied, whatever shifts and evasions commentators have invented. God is made to say, in the sixth chapter of Genesis, speaking to Noah and his children, "sanguinem animarum vestrarum requiram de manu cunctarum bestiarum, et de manu hominis," etc. The text is plain. Shall it be evaded by saying, on some rabbinical authority, that the antediluvian tyrants kept wild beasts to destroy men? and if they did so, who was to suffer, the tyrant or the beasts? not the beast certainly, unless they had both the same law: and yet the beast was accountable by it, as well as the tyrant. Thus, again, in the 13th of Deuteronomy, God is made to say in the supposed case of idolatry—"percuties habitatores urbis illius in ore gladii, et delebis eam ac omnia quæ in illa sunt, usque ad pecora." Will it be sufficient to say that this order was given to show the heinousness of a crime, by the punishment of creatures who neither were nor could be guilty of it? Among the judgments denounced, in Leviticus, against those

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who should copulate with beasts, the punishment is to be inflicted on the beast as well as on the man or woman. "Qui cum jumento et pecore coierit morte moriatur: pecus quoque occidite. Mulier quæ succubuerit cuilibet jumento simul interficietur cum eo: sanguis eorum sit super eos." The Jews are said to have dispensed with this punishment, when the boy was under nine, and the girl under three years of age; because they did not suppose children so young to be capable of such pollution. But was the beast that copulated with a man or a woman, at any age, capable of knowing the crime? Mr. Selden brings a passage or two out of the Misna to show that the beast was not put to death for sinning against any law, but in order to blot out the memory of so great a scandal. He adds, that the death of the beast was deemed a punishment on the owner, who should have kept him with greater care; and from hence he concludes, "adeò ut pœnam ob jus aliquod violatum ad bestiam attinere neutiquam ullatenus admittant, nec jure aliquo eam teneri." But it will not be hard to prove, from what Mr. Selden* himself admits in this very chapter, that the Jews made beasts accountable, like moral agents, whatever their rabbins might pretend, to mitigate the absurdity. The Sadducees brought some such accusation against them. Maimonides answers it by denying that the beast, who had killed a man, was put to death, "ad pœnam ab illa exigendam." He was put to death, "ad pœnam exigendam a domino;" for it was not lawful to eat the goring ox, after he had been stoned. But if this was so, how came the ox to escape when he had killed a Gentile, and to be stoned irremissibly when he had killed a Jew? How came the same rule to be observed in the case of bestiality? In short, is it not plain, and would it not be allowed to be so, in the case of any other nation, that the Jews imagined the law of nature to be common to man and beast; that they understood and executed their own law accordingly, and that notwithstanding the distinction made between the law of the Gentiles and the law of the Jews, with respect to the punishment, they must have proceeded in the cases here mentioned without any principle at all, or on this principle that beasts are by nature accountable for crimes, and even able to discern between the greater crime and the less? I know nothing more absurd than this, except a custom or law at Athens, that was, however, less cruel. The weapons by which a murder had been committed were brought into court, as if they too were liable to punishment; and the statue that had killed a man by its fall, was, by a solemn sentence of that wise people, the Thasii, founded on a law of Draco, cast into the sea.

* Lib. i, c. 4.

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The principle of this jurisprudence cannot be reconciled to right reason. But the definition of the Roman lawyers may be shown to be rather too short than false. As far as an instinct, common to all animals, directs the conduct of men, this instinct may be called the law of nature, and this law may be called the law of the whole kind. But in the human species, where instinct ceases, reason is given to direct; a second table is added to the first, and both together compose the law of nature relatively to man. Instinct and reason may be conceived as different promulgations of the same law; one made of a part only by nature herself, immediately and universally; the other marked out by her in the whole extent of the law, and to be collected from these marks or notices by reason, which is right or wrong as it promulgates agreeably to them or not.

There is a sort of genealogy of law, in which nature begets natural law, natural law sociability, sociability union of societies by consent, and this union by consent the obligation of civil laws. When I make sociability the daughter of natural law, and the granddaughter of nature, I mean plainly this. Self-love, the original spring of human actions, directs us necessarily to sociability. The same determination of nature appears in other animals. They all herd with those of their own species, with whom they sympathise more; whose language, perhaps, whether it consists in signs or sounds, they understand better, and from whom if individuals do not receive much good, they may have less evil to apprehend. This instinct operates, at least, as strongly in man. I shall not contradict what Tully says,* in his offices, that if we were not sociable "propter necessitatem vitæ," on account of our mutual wants, if they were all supplied by Providence and without any human help, "quasi virgulâ divinâ," yet still we should fly absolute solitude, and seek human conversation. I believe we should. But even in this imaginary case, self-love would be the determining principle still. That friendships may be formed, and maintained, without any consideration of utility, I agree, and hope I have proved. There is a sort of intellectual sympathy, better felt than expressed, in characters, by which particular men are sometimes united sooner, and more intimately, than they could be by mere esteem, by expectation of good offices, or even by gratitude. I know not, to say it by the way, whether there is not a sort of corporeal sympathy too, without the supposition of which, it is impossible to account for the strong attachments which some men have had for the least tempting and in all respects the least deserving women, and some women for the least tempting and least deserving men.

* Cic. lib. i, c.

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But this is not the case of general sociability. To account for that, we have no need to recur to occult qualities. Instinct leads us to it, by a sense of pleasure: and reason, that recalling the past, foresees the future, confirms us in it, by a sense of happiness. Instinct is an inferior principle, and sufficient for the inferior ends to which other animals are directed. Reason is a superior principle, and sufficient for the superior ends to which mankind is directed. The necessities, the conveniences of life, and every agreeable sensation, are the objects of both. But happiness is a continued enjoyment of these, and that is an object proportioned to reason alone. Neither is obtained out of society; and sociability therefore is the foundation of human happiness. Society cannot be maintained without benevolence, justice, and the other moral virtues. These virtues, therefore, are the foundations of society; and thus men are led, by a chain of necessary consequences, from the instinctive to the rational law of nature, if I may speak so. Self-love operates in all these stages. We love ourselves, we love our families, we love the particular societies, to which we belong, and our benevolence extends at last to the whole race of mankind. Like so many different vortices, the centre of them all is self-love, and that which is the most distant from it is the weakest.

This will appear to be in fact the true constitution of human nature. It is the intelligible plan of divine wisdom. Man is able to understand it, and may be induced to follow it by the double motive of interest and duty. As to the first, real utility and right reason coincide. As to the last, since the author of our nature has determined us irresistibly to desire our own happiness, and since he has constituted us so, that private good depends on the public, and the happiness of every individual on the happiness of society, the practice of all the social virtues, is the law of our nature, and made such by the will of God, who having determined the end and proportioned the means, has willed that we should pursue one by the other. To think thus, is to think reasonably of man and of the law of his nature, as well as humbly and reverently of the Supreme Being. But to talk, like Cumberland, of promoting the good of the whole system of rational agents, among whom God is included, and of human benevolence towards him, is to talk metaphysical jargon and theological blasphemy. He confesses that he uses these expressions in an improper sense, and explains, most unintelligibly, to any man who has right conceptions of the majesty of the all-perfect Being, what he means. His meaning, which he takes from Tully, and which Tully took from the Stoicians, is expressed by the Roman philosopher in the first book of his laws. He says there, that "nothing is more divine than reason; that reason

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grown up to maturity and perfection is called wisdom; that nothing being better than this reason, which is in man as well as in God, the first society that man has is in this community of reason with God; that from this community of reason there arises a community of law, so that the whole world is to be deemed one city or state, composed of gods and men."* Much might be said to show the absurdity and impertinence of such doctrines as these, and some reflections to this purpose have been made occasionally. But I content myself to observe here, how unnecessary these doctrines are to explain what the laws of nature are, and what the authority is by which they are made laws, even in the strictest sense of the word. We say, that the law of nature is the law of reason: and so it is in this sense, and thus far. A right use of this faculty, which God has given us, collects this law from the nature of things, as they stand in the system which he has constituted. Reason can look no higher, nor will right reason attempt it; for surely no disquisition can be more vain and needless than that which examines, whether actions are lawful or unlawful, "debiti aut illiciti," because they are commanded or forbid by God; or whether they are such "per se," independently on God, and therefore necessarily, "necessariò;" commanded or forbidden by him. Grotius† adopts the last of these notions: and the general current of metaphysical refinement runs that way. It assumes in man a community of reason with God, and then it seems consequential to assume, that men, such men at least as these reasoners imagine themselves to be, are able to discern natures and to judge of things antecedently to actual existence, and abstractedly from it; whereas perhaps, to think rightly, we must think that these natures and things, considered abstractedly from the manner and the relations in which they exist, are nothing better than imaginary entities, objects of ill chosen speculation not of knowledge. He who thinks thus will be apt to ask, what would become of justice, if we suppose a system wherein there was no property; or what of temperance, if we supposed one wherein there could be no excess? such questions, and many other objections, would not be easily answered: and the sole effect of this hypothesis must be, as I think it has been, to render our notions of natural laws disputable and indeterminable in many cases. This disquisition is therefore not only vain but hurtful. It is needless too, absolutely needless; for will any man deny, that however indifferent actions may be, "per se" and simply consi-

* Quum adolevit atque perfecta est.——Eaque et in homine et in Deo. Una civitas communis deorum atque hominum existimandus. Cic. de Legib.

† Grot. De jure Bel. et Pac. Lib. i. c. 1.

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dered, they cease to be so when they are connected with a system, and cannot be separated not even in imagination from the relations they bear to other parts of the system, nor from their effects on the whole? The system to which we belong, like every other system, was made by the will of God, and therefore all the natures contained in it, both physical and moral, were ordained by the same will. It has been said with shocking impiety, by schoolmen and others, that if things were made as they are by the mere will of God, and not according to the essential differences and eternal independent natures of things, God might have made our obligations by the law of nature to be contrary to what they are. He might have made it our duty to blaspheme not to adore him, and to exercise injustice not justice in our dealings with other men. But this is one instance, and not the least, of that habitual presumption which men contract in the schools of metaphysics and theology, where they are accustomed to reason about what infinite wisdom and power might, or should have done, instead of contenting themselves to know what they have done, and pronouncing it, for that reason, fittest to be done. In created man, God designed to create not only a rational but a social creature, and a moral agent: and he has framed his nature accordingly. If he had designed this world to be the habitation of devils, he might have made us by nature, what we say that they have made themselves by rebellion. But, as we ought not to presume to measure the divine perfections, nor the proceedings of infinite wisdom, by our scanty and precarious ideas, so it is worse than presumption to ascribe, even hypothetically, to the all-perfect Being any thing that is evidently repugnant to our ideas of perfection. Once more, therefore, let us be content to know things as God has been pleased to show them to us, and to look no further than our nature for the law of it. In that, we shall find this law coeval with our system, if not with the author, and as immutable as the system, if not as immutable as God.

They who affect to carry their search further, fall into different absurdities. Some are intent on such abstractions, as have been mentioned, abstractions of eternal essences, intelligible independent natures, by which both natural and moral differences were constituted, before there was any natural or moral law, any natural or moral agents. Whilst these men pretend to consult the dictates of right reason, they leave reason no rule to go by. Every man assumes that his own is right: and ethics becomes as intricate, as uncertain, and as contentious a science, as theology. Whilst these men misapply and abuse their reason, there are those who seem to have no want of it, in order to discover the law of nature. They affirm, that they have (and the sole

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proof in this case, as in the case of abstraction, is affirmation) a moral sense, that is, an instinct by which they distinguish what is morally good from what is morally evil, and perceive an agreeable or disagreeable intellectual sensation accordingly, without the trouble of observation and reflection. They bid fair to be enthusiaists in ethics, and to make natural religion as ridiculous, as some of their brothers have made revealed religion, by insisting on the doctrine of an inward light.

The last of these wild men, that I shall mention, are such as Anaxarchus, and our Hobbes. If the former had been guilty of nothing worse than that which Grotius lays to his charge, he would have been less liable to censure than Grotius himself. This great lawyer and divine distinguishes between the law of nature, and the positive law of God, or man. By the last, he understands a law of will.* By the first, a dictate of right reason,† that shows the moral turpitude,‡ or the moral necessity there is in every action, that is, a supposed morality, or immorality independent on any positive law. Thus he distinguishes, and therefore blames Anaxarchus for speaking too indistinctly of law.§ But this distinction muct not pass for true. The law of nature, which he allows divine in one sense, is in every sense as much as any other a positive law of God, enacted as truly by the divine will, and promulgated by the divine authority not only as truly, but more evidently and more universally, as well as immutably. The fault of Anaxarchus lay here, that to flatter Alexander, when he had killed Clitus,‖ he attributed to this prince the power that the poets attributed to Jupiter, the power to make particular and even occasional rules of right and wrong by will. The fault of Hobbes lay here, he put the Supreme Being out of the case entirely, ascribed no legislative authority or no exercise of it to him, assumed all actions to have been indifferent not only before our system was created, but even after it was so, and till the civil magistrate had made a difference between them, by commanding some, and by forbidding others.

Many such general and fundamental absurdities as these are to be found in the writings even of those who have written with the most applause on this subject; besides a multitude of particular questions, as frivolous as any that the schoolmen ever broached. I pass them all by with the neglect that they deserve, except one; some further notice of which is necessary to connect with what has been said, and to carry on my train of thoughts.

* Jus Voluntarium. † Dictatum rectæ rationis.
‡ Moralem turpitudinem, aut necessitatem moralem.
§ Nimium indistinctè. ‖ Plut. in Alexan.

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VII.

The presumption of those, who pretend to deduce our moral obligations from the moral attributes of God, has so much theological authority on its side, that the absurdity of it cannot be too often exposed and censured. There is fraud too, which I did not observe before, in this pretension; and fraud so manifest, that we may sometimes suspect it to be wilful. Instead of transferring from God to man, to use a phrase of Cicero, they transfer from man to God; and whilst they boast that man is made after the image of God, they make God after the image of man. What they present to us for a copy, is the original; and what they present for the original, is in reality the copy. Though we rise from the knowledge of ourselves, and of the other works of God, to a knowledge of his existence and his wisdom and power, which we call infinite, because the sensible effects of them go far beyond our utmost conceptions of wisdom and power, yet we cannot rise thus to a knowledge of his manner of being, nor of his manner of producing those effects which give us ideas of wisdom and power; and as little or less if possible, can we rise from our moral obligations to his supposed moral attributes. I call them supposed, because, after all that has been said to prove a necessary connection between his physical and his moral attributes, the latter may be all observed in his wisdom. It is even more agreeable to the phenomena, to believe that they are so, and that his wisdom determining him to do always that which is fittest to be done upon the whole, of which fitness we are in no degree competent judges: the effects of it give us sometimes ideas of those moral qualities, which we acquire by reflection on ourselves or by our dealings with one another, and sometimes not. The works of God would give us ideas of wisdom and power, if human actions and operations gave us none; and in fact, the example of savage nations will show, I think, that the first and strongest impressions of this kind come from thence. But it is evident, that the first and strongest impressions that we receive of benevolence, justice, and other moral virtues, come from reflection on ourselves, and from our dealings with one another, from what we feel in ourselves, and from what we observe in other men. These we acknowledge to be, however limited and imperfect, the excellences of our own nature, and therefore conceiving them without any limitations or imperfections, we ascribe them to the divine. We do worse: we ascribe our affections and passions to the divine nature. We make God so much a copy of

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man, that we design the worst, as well as the best, of our own features, if I may say so, in our representations of him: and as common as it is, no unprejudiced thinking man can hear, without astonishment, our perfections and our imperfections imputed to the Supreme Being, in the same breath, and by the same men; with this difference, at most, that the former are imputed directly, and the latter sometimes under the thin and trite veil of analogy. In a being thus constituted, they may well imagine that the moral virtues are the same as they are in our ideas: and theology may easily deduce from his attributes, the characters theology has given them. But a being thus constituted is not the supreme, the all perfect Being: and a very short analysis of the excellences of our own nature will be sufficient to show, that they cannot be applied from man to God without profaneness, nor from God to man without the most shameful absurdity. Let me allude, on this occasion, to a passage I have seen quoted from the ethics of Aristotle. To what actions of the divinity can we apply, or from what can we deduce our notions of human justice? Both might be done, perhaps, by those who assumed, like Tully, a community of gods and men, or by those who drew the divinity down to human conversations and human cares, to be immediately, and, as we may say, personally an actor in human affairs, to be a contracting party in covenants and alliances with men. Nay, something of the same kind may be done by those who acknowledge the infinite wisdom of God, and yet include him in this system of rational agents, every one of which is obliged to promote the good of the whole; who acknowledge the infinite distance between God and man, and yet assert that they may be compared together on account of their rationality, and be said, not figuratively but literally, to be of the same mind. But how shall we deduce fortitude from the attributes of God, or ascribe this virtue to him who can endure no pain, nor be exposed to any danger? How temperance, when it would be the most horrid blasphemy to suppose him subject to any human appetites and passions, and much more to some so inordinate as to require a particular virtue to restrain and govern them? I might bring many more instances of the same kind. But these are enough: and he, who will not be convinced by these; how absurdly the laws of nature are founded, by some writers, in the moral attributes of God, will be convinced by none.

But now, as absurd as these doctrines are, we must not imagine that the law of nature wants any proofs of a divine sanction, or a divine original. They are both contained in one: and the punishment, which attends the breach of this law, results as necessarily as the law itself, from that nature which God has

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been pleased to constitute, according to his good pleasure. Let it not be said, that this punishment is only temporal, and the sanction therefore insufficient. Let not this be said, particularly by those men, who talk so much of a positive law given by God to his chosen people, the sanction of which was no other than temporal pains and penalties. Let it not be objected further, that the penalties, which make the sanction of natural law, affect nations, collectively, and not men individually; for which reason, they are less proper to enforce the observation of the law. The penalties annexed to the breach of the law of Moses were of the same kind, in general oppression, famine, pestilence, wars and captivities: and when particular punishments were inflicted by virtue of this law, it did no more, than what is done every day and in all countries, with less tumult and with better order, in consequence of the law of nature, and for the preservation of society. Once more, let it not be objected, as it has been, that this law is not universally known. It is universally given, and if it is not known and practised alike by all mankind, many of the first great principles of it are so in every human society, even in those of the least civilised people; whilst the far greatest part of the world are invincibly ignorant of the first principles of Christianity, without the knowledge of which, and without faith in which, they are all condemned to eternal punishment.

Instead of making objections so insufficient as these, and so liable to be retorted, let the same men confess that the divine institution of the law of nature rests on fuller and more convincing proofs, both external and internal, than any that have been found or could be given, of the divine institution of Christianity The latter has all those which the manner in which it was revealed, and the nature of it, allowed it to have. But the manner in which the former has been revealed to mankind, as well as the matter of it, admitted of proofs of both kinds, much more evident, and much more proportioned to the human understanding. The good news of Christianity was published by Christ and his Apostles; it was confirmed by miracles, and the proof, was no doubt sufficient for the conversion of all those who heard the publication of this doctrine, and saw the confirmation of it. One can only wonder, that such remained unconvinced. But this proof became, in a very little time, traditional, and historical: and one might be allowed to wonder, how the effect of it continued, and increased too, as the force of it diminished, if the reasons of this phenomenon were not obvious in history. Nay though they are so, one may still wonder why they, who propagate Christianity, have not met oftener with the answer which Ethelred the Saxon king, made

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to Augustine, "I cannot abandon the religion of my fathers, for one that you would persuade me to receive on the authority of persons quite unknown to me." He came however afterwards to a better sense, either by the supernatural effects of grace, or by the natural effects of the cajolement or importunity, perhaps, of Berthe. The revelation of the law of nature is of another kind. Whether the word of God is his word may be, and we see has been, disputed by theists. But whether his works are his works, neither has been, nor can be disputed by any such. Natural religion therefore being founded on human nature, the work of God, and on the necesary conditions of human happiness which are imposed by the whole system of it, every man who receives the law of nature receives it on his own authority, and not on the authority of other men known or unknown, and in their natural state as fallible as himself. The revelation is not communicated to him only by tradition and history: it is a perpetual, a standing revelation, always made, always making, and as present in these days, as in the days of Adam, to all his offspring. The external proofs then, for these are properly such of the divine institution of the law of nature, are conclusive to every theist. Let us examine the internal, and compare them with the proofs that are contained in, or deduced from the Scriptures, to show their divine original.

VIII.

Now the unwritten law of God, unwritten even in the hearts of men, how early soever instinct disposes them to receive it, is an object of knowledge, not of belief. We know that God exists, with a certainty little inferior to that which we have of our own existence. We know that he has given us a law of our nature, with as great a certainty as inward consciousness and outward observation can give us: and by these means, by which we acquire all other science, it is in the power of every rational creature to acquire as much of this science as the ends of his being make it necessary that he should. Natural law is founded in reason, which every creature, that has it, may exercise, and the creature, that has it not, is not subject to the law. Christianity is founded in faith; and faith proceeds from grace. He, who has not faith cannot fulfil a law that consists, at least, as much in believing as in practising: and whether he shall have grace, or no, does not depend on him. Thus the difference between the internal proofs of the two laws stands in one respect. The contents of the law of nature are objects of such a certainty as the author of nature alone can communicate. The contents

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of the whole Christian system, laid down in our Scriptures, are objects of such a probability as may force assent very reasonably, in this case, without doubt; although a concurrence of various circumstances improved by the credulity of some men and the artifice of others, has forced this assent in cases not very dissimilar, and wherein it would have been more reasonably withheld. The difference here stated, between the manifestations of the will of God to man in the law of nature and in every other law, is so true, that every other law is controlled by it, and could not pass for the law of God if it was seen to be repugnant to the former. To say nothing of the law given to Adam, nor of that given to Noah, according to the Jews, all orthodox writers think themselves obliged to hold, for the honor of the Mosaic law, not only that there is nothing contrary to the natural law enjoined by it, "id quod eâ lege præcipitur non esse contra jus naturæ," as Grotius says,* but also that all the obligations of the natural law are contained in it, "contineri quidem in sacro illo corpore seu pentateucho," as Mr. Selden says, though he owns at the same time that much chemical skill is necessary to extract them from it. That the Christian law is nothing else than the law of nature, enforced by a new revelation, every friend to Christianity admits, and the worst of its enemies dare not deny though he denies the reality of the revelation.

Another internal proof of the divine original of the law of nature is the plainness and simplicity, which renders it intelligible in all times and all places alike, and proportions it to the meanest understanding. It has been made intricate by casuistry, that of lawyers and that of divines, as Christian religion has been by theology. But there is a considerable difference between the two cases. The first principles of natural religion are so simple and plain, that casuistry has no apparent pretence to meddle with them, no more than it would have if it pretended to teach us to see things that lie obvious before us, at a just distance, and exactly proportioned to our sight. These principles want neither paraphrase nor commentary, to be sufficiently understood; whereas the very first principles of Christian religion, concerning the fall and redemption of man, are so veiled in mystery of language, that without a comment, or with one, and even with that of St. Paul, they give us no clear and distinct ideas, nor any thing more than forms of speech and words to pronounce. They who under this pretence, such as it is, introduce reason where reason has nothing to do, explain what revelation has left unexplained, and define articles of faith which are either defined in the word of God, or which no mortal has

* Lib. i, c. 1, De Jure Bel. et Pac.

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any right to define, introduce afterwards their theology, under the name of moral theology, where that has nothing to do, and corrupt the unwritten law of God even with less pretence than they corrupted the written. I charge this double corruption upon them the more boldly, because every one, who is in the least conversant in their writings, is able to bring numerous instances of both, and to show, that I may keep to my present subject, how they have established doctrines and decided cases of conscience, in direct opposition to the most known and the most sacred duties of natural religion, till they have rendered men infinitely worse than they would have been in Hobbes's state of nature, without any religion or law whatever. Two things alone have checked this torrent of iniquity to some degree. The first has been the interposition of the civil power. The second has been the insuperable difficulty of determining men, generally and constantly, and out of some peculiar circumstances, to violate the laws of their nature, as individuals, or as members of society, by precept, by example, or by any authority whatever. The light of nature, like that of the sun, may be eclipsed: it cannot be extinguished.

Notwithstanding all the abuses of private and public morality, therefore, that the passions of some men may commit occasionally, and that the particular interest of others may invite them to propagate, even under the mask of religion, these two internal proofs of the divine institution of the law of nature, the conscious certainty that we have, and the plainness and simplicity of it, are in their full force, and superior to those of the same kind which any other revelation contains. It may seem strange to many that the plainness and simplicity of the law of nature should be brought as a proof of its divinity. They have been accustomed to think that types, symbols, figures, dark enigmatical expressions, and every thing that has the appearance of mystery, are essential marks of a divine revelation. Such might a revelation made to superior beings appear to us; and such would a revelation made to us concerning the divine nature, and the secret economy of the divine providence, not only appear to be, but really be, mysterious and unintelligible, and therefore no revelation at all. For this very reason, it is agreeable to all our ideas of wisdom to believe, that no such revelation was intended to be made to us. Such means could not be proportionable to any end. The all-wise Creator could not mean to inform his creatures unintelligibly, nor to leave an explanation of his nature and of the whole economy of his providence, to be made by men who undertake both presumptuously, and who dishonor both, as far as man may be said to honor or dishonor God, by all the silly paradoxes they advance dogmatically, and

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without having, for the most part, any just notions even of the wisdom and dignity of human conduct in superior forms of life. Such mysterious means then could not have been effectual, unless our improvement in metaphysical knowledge had been the end of divine wisdom, which it would be impertinent to suppose; and if the end of this wisdom was to inform us of the divine will, to show us the perfection of our nature, and to teach us to tend towards it in the pursuit of happiness, such means are quite unnecessary. They are, therefore, proportioned to no end. They are, therefore, unworthy of God.

Clearness, precision, and a true conformity to the nature of things are the perfections of human, and much more of divine laws. Though the nature of the universe, and the rules by which God proceeds in the government of every system contained in it, of ours among the rest, are unknown to us, yet is the nature of our own system, as far as the morality of actions is concerned, sufficiently known to us, and the laws of our nature consequently, since they result from it. Here then is all the clearness, all the precision, and all the conformity to the nature of things that God can give, or man desire. From hence we may, and we ought to form our judgment of all laws that are assumed to be divine. They must not be incomprehensible; because, though they proceed from the divine intelligence, they are adapted to the human. God does not show his own nature in them. He shows us our nature, and our duty; by the first of which we stand in the lowest relation of intellectual creatures to their Creator, and by the last in that of subjects and servants to a gracious and beneficent lord and master, who gives us laws neither ambiguous nor captious, and who commands us nothing which it is not our interest to perform.

Another internal proof of the divinity of natural law must not be passed over without mention. As all is simple and plain, nothing is mean nor trifling in it. This religion shows us a Supreme Being, veiled in the majesty of his nature, but manifested in all his works, to be the true and only true object of our adoration. In the existence he has given us, and in the benefits that attach us so strongly to it, this religion shows him to be the first and greatest object of our gratitude; in the established order of things, subject to so many vicissitudes and yet so constant, to be the reasonable, as well as necessary object of our resignation; and finally in the wants, distresses, and damages, which these vicissitudes bring frequently upon us, to be the comfortable object of our hope: in which hope, the religion of nature will teach us, no doubt, to address ourselves to the Almighty, in a manner consistent with an entire resignation to his will, as some of the heathen did. But this religion will not teach us to pray, as if

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we informed omniscience, or expostulated with omnipotence, as those who pretend to be the most reformed among Christians are accustomed to do; nor to make religion a service of show and outward gesture, as your pretended catholic church has done. The religion of nature teaches to worship God in spirit and in truth, that is, inwardly and sincerely. It neither confounds spiritual pride and enthusiasm, nor theatrical pomp and superstitious rites, with devotion. Fraud, envy, malice, silent and secret vices, more dangerous often to society than those of greater eclat, have lurked behind the former. The latter, though they affect the senses without touching the heart, have passed in general, and still pass, for divine worship. God has been served, in a manner which the most sanguinary tyrant would abhor, by some people. By others, with all the circumstances of that low adulation which earthly monarchs require, and whereof the priests themselves have claimed a share. That there is a middle proceeding fit to be observed, between a theatrical worship and a worship stripped of all outward solemnity and pomp, I am ready to admit. In this, and in a multitude of cases, the law of nature or right reason may approve such laws and institutions as nature or reason has not prescribed; because they may be proper, and even necessary means to promote the observation of this law. But then they ought to pass for forms directed to this purpose, for human not for divine ordinances. Let the priest wear a ridiculous cap and breast-plate, or fringes and bells on his robe, but let it not be said that the Supreme Being took care of his attire, or that such trifles as these were the institutions of divine wisdom.

There is nothing in the law of nature unworthy the author of it; and much less can it, or does it, contain any thing inconsistent with itself. The rules by which God governs even the system to which we belong are unknown to us; but this we know most certainly, that he cannot command in particular, what he forbids in general. He who has made benevolence to all rational beings the fundamental law of our nature, can never command some to rob, or to murder others; to usurp on the rights of their fellow-creatures, and to exterminate whole nations. In short, the internal proofs of the divinity of the law of nature, both positive and negative, are such as render this law the true criterion of every law and religion that pretend to the same original. It may be disputed, perhaps, whether our abstract notions of the moral fitness and unfitness of things afford a sufficient rule, whereby to judge of the truth of any religion that is said to come from God. But there is no room to dispute, whether the conformity or non-conformity of such a religion to that law which God has given to all his human creatures, enacted in the constitution of their

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nature, and discernible by the use of those faculties he has given them likewise, is a rule sufficient for this purpose. Was it otherwise, we should have no sufficient rule at all. Men might dispute eternally about the dictates of right reason, and the will of God would be entirely out of the question; or it would be made determinable by an indeterminable question, what those eternal fitnesses and unfitnesses of things are, according to which, and in a dependency on which, the will of God must proceed, and be signified to his creatures. That this would be so, is evident in the different opinions that have been entertained, ever since theology was made a science, concerning the existence of evil as well as good, and concerning the distribution of them. But if we confine ourselves to the revelation God has made of his will in his works, and to the knowledge we have that his will is necessarily determined by his wisdom, we shall have a certain and sufficient rule by which to judge of his laws. What is the will of God, is a question easily answered. What ought this will to be, is a question we cannot presume to answer without absurdity and impiety both. To answer the first, we need to go no higher than the moral obligations that arise in our own system, and of which we have very adequate ideas. To answer the last, we must go up to the nature of the author of nature, and to a multitude of other natures, the assuming of which puts the Supreme Being just in the case of his creature man. The nature of the human system is independent on man; and yet he is obliged to derive the rules of his conduct from it. Just so, upon this assumption, the abstract natures and eternal essences of things are independent on God; and yet God was obliged to make, and is obliged to govern his system according to them.

By employing our reason to collect the will of God from the fund of our nature, physical and moral, and by contemplating seriously and frequently the laws that are plainly, and even necessarily deducible from these, we may acquire not only a particular knowledge of these laws, but a general, and in some sort an habitual, knowledge of the manner in which God is pleased to exercise his supreme power in this system, beyond which we have no concern. We do not see the divine painter, if I may employ so low a comparison on so high a subject; but we grow accustomed to his manner, and we learn to despise those who present us a sign-post daubing, and call it impudently the work of Raphael.

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IX.

As certain, as plain, as important and as consistent as the law of nature is, it has been blended with many absurd and contradictory laws, in all ages and countries, by legislators who published them, sometimes in their own name, and sometimes in the name of God, as well as with customs of the same kinds; which, if they arose independent on laws, obtained the force of laws.—Eusebius, in the first book of his evangelical preparation, gives a long catalogue of them; and he gives it for a very good purpose, to show in several instances how such laws and customs as these had been reformed by the gospel, that is, by a law which renewed and confirmed and enforced the original law of nature. Sextus Empiricus, an ancient, and Montagne, a modern sceptic, collected numerous examples of the same sort, but to a very bad purpose; to show, if they had been able, that there is no such thing as a fixed immutable law of nature, which obliges all men at all times alike. They sought it where it is not to be found, and, not finding it there, concluded it was to be found no where. This doctrine has been promoted by Pyrrhonians, Sceptics, and Academicians, between whom it is neither obvious nor worth our while to distinguish, as well as by dogmatical atheists; for they who doubted of God's existence, or who denied it, could not fail to doubt of, or to deny, the existence of his law. Of all these, it will be sufficient to mention the admired Carneades, the sum of whose disputation upon this subject Lactantius has preserved; and although it be one of those trite commonplace citations which abound in learned writings, yet it deserves a particular mention; because it expresses, in very few words, the full absurdity of those who deny a natural law, and points out the two principal blunders on which their whole reasoning proceeds.

Carneades then affirmed,* "that laws were made by men, for their utility; that they were therefore various, as the characters of those who made them; and, changeable among the same men according to the various circumstances of time: but that there was no law of nature. That all men, and all animals, were carried to their several kinds of utility by nature, so that there could be no justice, or if there was any such thing, it must be

* Jura sibi homines pro utilitate sanxisse, silicet varia pro moribus, et apud eosdem pro temporibus sæpe mutata; jus autem naturale nullum esse. Omnes et homines, et alias animantes, ad utilitates suas, natura ducente ferri: proinde, aut nullam esse justitiam, aut si sit aliqua, summam esse stultitiam; quoniam sibi noceret alienis commodis consulens.

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extremely foolish; because, in providing for the good of others, the just would hurt themselves." That laws were made for utility, both those which we call civil and those which we call the laws of nations, that they are various as the characters of men, and changeable as the circumstances of time no one will deny. But will it follow, that there is no such thing as a natural law, such as the wisest philosophers, and even the ancient poets have acknowledged, although a little confusedly according to their custom, yet in plain and direct opposition to this doctrine? a law, neither invented by men, nor enacted by human authority, "neque hominum ingeniis excogitatam, neque scitum aliquod populorum? a law not coeval with the divine mind, as Tully* would have it, when he says, "orta autem est simul cum mente divinâ;" but such a law as he describes in the words that stand immediately before these, a law proceeding from the nature of things, "ratio profecta à rerum natura;" a law which did not begin when it was first reduced into writing, "quæ non tum denique incipit lex esse cum scripta est:" but when it first existed "sed tum cum orta est;" and it existed first, when that system of nature from which it results, "unde profecta est," began to exist? The first part, therefore, of this Academical declamation proved nothing against natural law; and Carneades might as well have affirmed, that the Athenians had no laws before Solon, because Solon gave them some; or that rapes were lawful at Rome before Sextus Tarquinius ravished Lucretia, because there was no written law before that time which forbid them. The second part contains two blunders, that run into one another. It is a blunder surely to assume, that men, and all other animals, are carried indiscriminately by nature to their end, utility; without distinguishing between natural instinct common to both, and superior reason peculiar to man. It is a blunder surely to assume, in consequence, that since utility is their object, justice is a folly. Men may have pleasure to which instinct hurries them, but they cannot have happiness, to which reason leads them, without justice, according to what has been already laid down: and it is wisdom therefore, not folly, to forego the first in some instances, in every instance where the least incompatibility is found between them, that we may secure the last. The good of individuals is so closely connected with the good of society, that the means of promoting one cannot be separated from those of promoting the other: and Socrates was in the right to curse the men, who first divided, in opinion, things that cohered, in nature, morality and utility: "qui primum hæc naturâ cohærentia opinione distraxissent."† I might have quoted the

* Tully De Leg. l. i. † Tully De Off. l. 3.

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latter part of what Lactantius makes Carneades say, and which is said to show the great hurt that justice would do, in order to show more truly the hurt that injustice does. If the Romans, and all those who were possessed of empire, had been obliged to restore to every people the unjust usurpations they had made upon them, these conquerors would have been obliged to return to their huts, and to their ancient penury, "ad casas esse redeundum, et in egestate et miseriis jacendum." But it is almost too trifling to deserve mention; since, transferred from the law of nations to the laws of particular societies, it objects to justice the great mischief of obliging a robber to restore to the owner what he has stolen from him, and denies that restitution is just, although reparation of injuries is plainly esseutial to justice.

If we had all the volumes that have been written concerning the laws, institutions, customs, and manners of the different societies of men, we should be rather perplexed than informed concerning the true system of natural law: and Montagne might challenge his readers, pretty safely, to show him any one of these which had the seal of universal approbation. But even this would not serve his purpose, nor afford any proof against the existence of a law which human reason collects from the human system, as he vainly imagined in his zeal for Pyrrhonism. The laws of nature are truly what my Lord Bacon styles his aphorisms, the laws of laws. Civil laws are always imperfect, and often false deductions from them, or applications of them; nay, they stand, in many instances, in direct opposition to them. It follows from hence, not that there is no natural law, but that civil laws have been made without a sufficient and constant regard to it. Erroneous opinions of philosophers, unreasonable institutions of legislators, are often derived from the principles of nature, and may be traced up to them. The fountain from which they flowed was pure. They grew foul in their course; and no wonder they should, since the channels through which they passed were infected with human passions, human prejudices, and human ignorance. Such laws, as cannot be traced up even under these conditions, to the original of all law, are the arbitrary dictates of mere will, imposed on some men by the force or fraud of others, and confirmed by education and custom.

Thus is the law of nature hid from our sight by all these variegated clouds of civil laws and customs, as the divine author of it is by those of superstition and artificial theology. Some gleams of true light may be seen through them. But they render it a dubious light, and it can be no better to those who have the keenest sight, till these interpositions are removed. Then, indeed, the objects appear in their full and genuine lustre to every sight; for that which hid them both could affect neither.

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X.

Many hypotheses have been made to account for the beginning of civil society, for the nature of it, and for the motives to it. All of them have some degree of probability, and might have some share in framing those political congregations and unions, by which mankind has been divided into distinct nations, and the great commonwealth, as the Stoicians called it not improperly, into distinct states. But no one of these must pass for universal, nor be supposed to have done the work alone. In general we may say, that the foundations of civil or political societies were laid by nature, though they are the creatures of art. Societies were begun by instinct, and improved by experience. They were disturbed early, perhaps as soon as they were formed, both from within and from without, by the passions of men: and they have been maintained ever since, in opposition to them, very imperfectly, and under great vicissitudes, by human reason, which is exercised in particular systems of law for particular states, in leagues and covenants between state and state, and in tacit agreements that constitute what is commonly called the law of nations.

The first principles of every thing, that requires human understanding and human industry to be employed about it, are rightly laid in nature; they are obvious to our search, and we are able to discover and pursue the consequences of them in speculation and in practice. But in doing this, we are left, as I may say, to ourselves. We owe the first discoveries to our own observation, and the progress we make afterwards to the strength of our own understandings, to our application and industry. We may do this well or ill; we may do too little or attempt too much, according to the use, and the right or wrong judgment, we make of our faculties; for the "bona and mala ratio," that Cotta insists upon so much,* is nothing else.

It is in great measure otherwise in the case of civil polity. In this we are not left to ourselves. We are not left to make the discovery, nor to proceed, in consequence of it, by the strength of our own understandings. We are led to it by the hand of God, as it were, and even before we have the full use of our understandings. When God made man, he made a creature, the happiness of whose being depended on his sociability with animals of his own species. He made him therefore a sociable animal, an animal capable of feeling the immediate pleasure and

* Cic. de Nat. Deor.

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advantage of society. The necessity of natural precedes that of artificial society; and the former, which is connected by instinct, prepares us for the latter, to which we are determined by reason. We are made capable of both in their turns. The infant cannot conceive the nature of those covenants that constitute civil society, any more than he can propagate his species. Neither his mental, nor his corporeal powers are arrived at their maturity. The ignorant man does not know them, because he has not informed himself, nor been informed by others, about them: and he who is born stupid is out of the case. I say this the rather, to expose once more the futility of that argument which has been mentioned already. To prove that the child, whilst he is a child, and the ignorant man, whilst he is ignorant, can neither institute civil society, nor comprehend the nature of it, serves to no other purpose, than to compose to slumber a reader of common sagacity, who perceives at one glance the different senses, though equally true, in which men are reckoned qualified for civil siciety, and fishes to swim, or birds to fly, or oaks to bear acorns.*

You poets have given beautiful descriptions of a golden age, with which you suppose that the world began. Some venerable fathers of the church have given much the same descriptions of another golden age, with which they suppose that it is to end, and which will make some amends for the short duration of the paradisaical state, since the latter is to continue a thousand years. Now, though I do not believe that men were as good, any more than I believe that other animals were as tame, by nature, as you represent them to have been in the primeval world; yet I do not believe neither, that such a state, as Hobbes assumed, ever did, or could exist, nor that men ever were in a state of absolute individuality at any time before the institution of civil society. How they came into the world, reason will tell us no better than history or tradition does. To suppose that the first of human kind were quickened into life by the sun, and were animated systems of mud, as the Egyptians did, I think, accordiug to Diodorus Siculus, would be too absurd; neither could we conceive, if the hypothesis was admitted, how these human insects were able to provide for their wants, and to rear themselves up to manhood, whatever we assumed the physical constitution of the world to have been at that time. If we are persuaded then, that this world, and the inhabitants of it had a beginning in time we must of necessity assume that the first men and the first women, or that one man and one woman at least were produced in full strength and vigor of body and mind, prompted by instinct to an act of which they might not foresee the consequence, and

* Vid. Puffen. Lib. vii, c. i.

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prompted by self-love, when they saw it, to love themselves in their children, and to nurse and educate their offspring.

Thus natural societies and paternal governments began. I shall not inquire how far the latter is founded in that blind act of generation, whose motive and end is the mutual pleasure of man and woman alone. Much less shall I misspend any time in comparing the opinion of Grotius,* which is favorable to paternal, with that of Hobbes, which is so to maternal authority.† This only I will observe, by the way, that if Hobbes advanced a paradox, it was such a one as he might have maintained with advantage against Grotius, and even with more against Filmer, who left the word "mother" out of his quotation of the fifth commandment. Grotius did not presume thus far, but he gives the preference to paternal authority, in the case of any dispute between the two, on account of the pre-eminence of the sex, "ob sexus præstantium." Another writer would have urged, that if the right of parents over children was acquired by generation, as Grotius‡ affirmed, the right of the mother ought to be preferred, in case of any dispute, since her right by generation can never be doubtful; the father's may. She is always a real mother: he may be often a reputed father, and the argument "ob sexus præstantium" is, in this particular instance, more applicable to the woman. But however this may be, the paternal authority, arising from education, is clear: and that instinct, which determines parents to take care of their children, gives them, by the law of nature, all that authority over them,§ without which they could not take this care. This authority is and must be absolute, whilst their children are unable to judge for, and to direct themselves. It becomes limited, when their children are able to do this without their help, and yet continue to live in the same family. It ceases, when their children go out of their family, and acquire independency, or even paternal dominion of their own.

Thus far the law of nature is plain: and this is sufficient to show, how we are led by the hand of God, that is, by the circumstances in which he has ordained that we should be born; by the necessary dependence of children, by the instinct of parents, by information, by habit, and finally by reason; how we are led, I say, to civil through natural society, and are fitted to be members of one, by having been members of the other. This is the case of every one in particular, and has been that of mankind collectively considered.

* Lib. ii, c. 5. † De Cive, c. 9.
‡ Generatione jus acquiritur parentibus in liberos.
§ Grotius, Ibid.

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All the inhabitants of some other planet may have been, perhaps, from their creation united in one great society, speaking the same language, and living under the same government; or too perfect by their nature to need the restraint of any. But mankind is constituted very differently: and although the natural law of our whole species be the same, yet we are by nature incapable, on many accounts, of uniting under one form of government, or of submitting to one rule of life. Our nearest approaches to this state are vastly distant from it; and even these were made by slow degrees, and with great variety of imperfection; although nature herself, by directing the first, made all the rest the more easy, as she made them the more necessary. Men were never out of society; for if they were divided into families before they were assembled into nations, they were in society still from their original: and the want of comprehending that which is natural, and that which is artificial, properly distinguished, under the same general term, has produced much confusion in reasoning on this subject, and has served to maintain many a false argument. Bayle,* for instance, denies that the peace, the happiness, and even the preservation of mankind, depend on society. How does he support his paradox? As ill at least, as he supports the inutility of religion to government. He cites Sallust to prove that the Aborigines in Italy, and the Getulians and the Lybians in Africa, had neither laws, nor magistrates, nor forms of government. He cites Pomponius Mela, and he might have cited many other authorities ancient and modern, to much the same purpose; for authors, by repeating one another, propagate the same mistakes very often, and increase the number of witnesses, without strengthening the testimony; which may have happened on these occasions for aught he knew. But this he knew, and this he would have observed, if the observation had made for him in this place, for he makes it in all those where it does make for him, how much authors are apt to exaggerate in their descriptions, and the characters they draw. How barbarous were those nations, who broke the Roman empire, represented to be, the Goths for example, or the Lombards? and yet when they came to settle in Italy, and to be better known, how much less barbarous did they appear, even than the Greeks and the Romans? what prudence in their government? what wisdom in their laws? But I touch this without insisting on it. Let it be, that the Aborigines, the Getulians, the Lybians, and the inhabitants of the inward parts of Africa, had neither written laws, nor civil magistrates, will it follow that they had no customs

* Pens. Diver. 118.

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which were among them equivalent to laws, no fathers nor elders that supplied the place of civil magistrates, no forms of government because they had not those of civil government? Will it follow, in short, that they lived without society, because they lived without political society? The very passage cited from Pomponius Mela shows the contrary. They were dispersed in families indeed, and these families were governed by no law common to them all, nor by any joint consultations. "In familias passim et sine lege dispersi, nihil in commune consultant." Just so are the Arabs of the desert, many of the Tartars, and other vagabond people at this day, not united by any national constitution: but so far from being without society or government, that their several families, or tribes, or hordes, are so many societies, and often better regulated than those that appear to be more civilised. Bayle, and the authors he cites, had nothing in their minds but political societies of human institution, and did not advert to those that are natural. When he affirmed, "that these people multiplied, and preserved themselves without living in society," and denied, on the authority of these examples, "that social life is absolutely necessary to the preservation of the human race," he did not enough consider, that it was impossible they should multiply without forming societies, and that he might have said just as well, that a country, overrun with independent companies of soldiers, had none in it, because these companies were not yet formed into legions or regiments.

Ancient traditions, sacred and profane, how imperfect and uncertain soever they are, give us sufficient reason, by their concurrence in this general account, to believe that mankind was at first dispersed in families, which formed so many distinct societies under paternal government. The Mosaical history contains the descent of one, that of Seth, down to the flood. There was no need of mentioning that of Cain, which was to be wholly destroyed in this terrible catastrophe. The descent of the family of Sem, after the flood, is most carefully recorded, and those of Ham and of Japhet are occasionally mentioned: for which difference a very good reason may be found, since the genealogy of the patriarchs, and of the people of God, was to be deduced from Sem. Our divines find a further reason. The Messiah was to proceed, above two thousand years afterwards, from a branch of the same family: and therefore the greatest care possible was taken to preserve the genealogy, as well as to perpetuate the race; of the latter of which Patrick gives a most remarkable instance in his commentary on Genesis. If the daughters of Lot committed incest with their father, we are not to ascribe it to unnatural lust, but to their innocence, their simplicity, and

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a laudable concern for the preservation of their father's family; for they believed all mankind destroyed, according to Irenæus; or, at least, they might believe that none were left who might go in unto them, "juxta morem universæ terræ."* Our learned bishop assumes, much more ingeniously and with greater regard to virgin modesty, that these young women had the same eager desire, which then possessed the hearts of good people, to fulfil the promise of the Messiah. It was that which put them on this otherwise monstrous crime. It was that which sanctified it, in the intention, though not in the event; for the two accursed races of Moabites and Ammonites were the fruits of this incest.

XI.

I have not spoken of this family to introduce the anecdote just mentioned, instructive and edifying as it is, but to show, by an illustrious example, what the first societies of men were, and how civil societies arose out of natural, as natural societies arose out of one another. When any of these grew too numerous to inhabit the same country, or dissensions arose among them, as it happened in the case of Abraham and Lot, and of Esau and Jacob afterwards, they separated. When the father of the family preferred one of his sons to all the rest, as Abraham had done, and as it was necessary that Isaac should do in order to give Jacob the pre-eminence over Esau, and the Israelites over the Idumeans, the families separated likewise, and new families were formed by the swarms that issued from ancient hives. The increase of families was not only great in those prolific ages, as we may observe by the numerous posterity of the two brothers Esau and Jacob; but we may conclude, from reason and analogy both, that if families sometimes separated, they sometimes united too, for mutual conveniency; and that in this manner several little dynasties were formed, which had more settled establishments than the vagabond families. How little these dynasties were, we may judge by the defeat which Abraham gave, with an army of three hundred and eighteen of his servants, to the four kings who had beaten the five, and pillaged Sodom and Gomorrah. There has been much learned dispute about the Egyptian dynasties: and they, who have corrupted Manetho more, very probably, than he did the truth, have delivered them down to us in such a broken, transposed, interpolated condition, that nothing almost which is probable can be collected from them. Why should we not believe, that his thirty dynasties were cotempo-

* Vid. lib. Gen. c. xix.

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rary, not successive? Why should the Egyptians not have been under the dominion of several petty kings, as well as their neighbors, when the title of king was bestowed so very liberally? On the whole, it cannot be doubted, I think, that the first societies of men were those of families formed by nature and governed by natural law, nor that kingdoms and states were the second.

Neighborhood, an intercourse of good offices, and, in a word, mutual conveniency, might give a beginning, by the union of independent families under compacts and covenants, to civil societies. But the principal cause of such artificial or political unions was of a very different kind. We cannot suppose, that all the members of every family lived in a state of uninterrupted concord. There was a quarrel, and one brother assassinated another, even in the family of the first man. But still in societies, as confined as these, the father's eye was over the whole community; paternal authority, not the royal fatherhood of that ridiculous writer Filmer, was always ready to interpose, and the remedy of separation was always at hand when every other failed. The state of mankind altered extremely when families had been long separated, whatever the cause of separation was; and when the natural bands were not only loosened, but lost and forgot in the course of generations; when there was no longer any regard to one common ancestor; when there was no authority to interpose between different people, and to influence and direct their conduct, as paternal authority had done, where different members of the same family were alone concerned; then mutual injuries became more frequent, and their consequences more fatal.

As fast as the distribution of mankind into families, and as paternal government ceased, men went out of a natural into a political state. The former was so little what it has been represented, a state of individuality, that individuality could never be properly ascribed to creatures born in society, and members of it as soon as born. Individuality belongs to communities, not to persons. Families might be conceived as individuals, though not men, in the state of nature; and civil societies much more so in the political state. The reason is plain. We have a natural sociability, that is, we are determined by self-love to seek our pleasure and our utility in society, as it has been said; but when these ends are once sufficiently answered, natural sociability declines, and natural insociability commences. The influence of self-love reaches no further. Societies become in all respects individuals, that is, they have no regard to others except relatively to themselves; and self-love, that promoted union among men, promotes discord among them. Like the philosopher of Malmesbury's wild men, they act as if they had a right to all

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they can acquire by fraud or force: and a state of war, so far from being the cause, has been the effect of forming distinct societies, though by the general plan of nature the propagation of mankind makes it necessary to form them. Such is our inconsistency, such are the contradictions that unite in the human character.

Hobbes, and Cumberland in opposition to him, have said much about the societies of ants and bees. I shall compare them with those of men no further, than the comparison is immediately apposite to my present purpose. The bees then, for it will be enough to speak of one species, and the comparison will hold best with that of which we have most experience; the bees, I say, co-operate visibly to one end, the general good of their respective communities, not by choice, nor compact, most probably, nor by authority neither, for their monarchs have no stings to punish the disobedient or the lazy; but by one invariable and constant direction, that of instinct. If reason could supply the place of instinct, be always at hand, and determine with as much force, men might be as good citizens as bees. But the rational creatures neglect their reason, or degrade her, in the intellectual economy, and make her the vile instrument of their appetites and passions. This is so much the case, that men would have been what Hobbes assumes that they were, if the divine wisdom had not constituted them so that they are, as soon as they come into the world, members of societies which are formed by instinct and improved by reason. What reason cannot do by herself, she does in some degree by the adventitious helps which experience enables her to acquire, by orders and rules of government which every man concurs to maintain; because every man is willing to control the passions and restrain the excesses of others, whatever indulgence he has for his own. I said, in some degree; for, even with these adventitious helps, reason preserves human societies unequally, and by a perpetual conflict: whereas instinct preserves those of bees in one uniform tenor, and without any conflict at all. The passions rebel against reason: but instinct is reason and passion both.

Thus bees live with bees in their several hives, and have much advantage over men in domestic life. But their sociability goes no further. Whenever any of these families, for to such they may be compared, transmigrate or send out colonies to seek new habitations, cruel wars ensue, if you will take the word of Virgil, as good a naturalist at least as Homer, for it. I have read somewhere, that Origen thought God had thus determined them, to set an example of making war to men. I had rather believe the father misunderstood or belied; and assume, that the same instinct governs these animals no longer, when they forsake the

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hives; so that their own ferocity, or that their kings, carries them to all the excesses of insociability. Every king is a Joshua, or an Attila, and under his command

"corpora bello
"Objectant, pulchramque petunt per vulnera mortem."

As long as he lives there is no composition, no peace, no truce to be had. They fight "usque ad internecionem." As soon as he falls, they plunder their common hive, and the family or little state is dissolved.

"Rege incolumi, mens omnibus una est.
Amisso, rupere fidem, constructaque mella
Diripuere ipsa, et crates solvere favorum."

It is not quite the same in the case of mankind. Their families or hordes, and the colonies they send out, unite sometimes for mutual utility with others, as I have hinted. Reason, which had co-operated with instinct before, takes the place of it now. They coalite amicably by covenants, they make laws by common consent, and from being members of a natural, they become such of a political society. It seems, however, that these political societies have been more frequently formed by compositions after wars, by a forced submission to the law of conquerors, and by associations made to prevent conquest. We easily conceive that the insociability of families made the strongest invade the weakest, and the weakest unite against the strongest. When larger communities were thus formed, the same insociability, and therefore the same policy, continued; so that fear may be said to have been a principal inducement in this manner to mankind, not to form societies, as it has been understood, but to submit to civil government.

Communities, formed by the union of different families, were not only more numerous than any particular families, but they were composed of heterogeneous parts, of members unconnected by consanguinity, or the habit of living together, and connected only by accidental circumstances, and the tie of covenants.—These circumstances, or the dispositions they had produced, might alter; and the tie of covenants, without a supreme power to enforce the observation of them, could not hold. Paternal authority, therefore, which had been sufficient to maintain, in some degree, peace and good order in societies composed of a few, and those few members of the same family as well as of the same society, might be insufficient, on both these accounts, to maintain the same degree of peace and good order in communities more numerous, and incorporated rather by art or by force, than by nature. Thus it became necessary to establish a power superior

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to that of the fathers of families, and, as fast as men went out of the state of nature, to substitute artificial to natural government. This was not done all at once, I suppose, nor every where in the same manner. But it seems most probable that these governments were in general monarchical. I know that some writers have thought otherwise; but they have no more right to affirm than I have, who am far from affirming. We must all guess, and probabilities must be weighed. It has been said, that when men, who were in a state of natural freedom and natural equality, resolved by common consent to submit themselves to civil government, they chose the democratical form, in order to keep this government in their own hands; and that the fathers of families, who had been used to independency, must have concurred in the same choice."* Now the very reverse of this seems more probable to me. The fathers of families, who could not all be kings upon this change, would have preferred aristocracy to democracy, and the multitude would have preferred monarchy to both. The former would have been desirous to retain some image of their ancient authority, and the latter would have slided into a form of government that resembled the paternal, to which they had been accustomed, much more easily than they would have constituted one entirely new, and the nature of which, for want of experience, would not have been very obvious to their apprehension. This easy transition, from paternal government to monarchical, seems to have been very well understood by Lycurgus, who, when he was advised to establish a popular government in Sparta, bid his adviser try in the first place to establish democracy in his own family.† One may conceive equally well how monarchy changed, by the abuse of power, into aristocracy, or democracy; and how these changed, by the usurpation of power, into monarchy. But the most ancient traditions, and the authority of ancient writers, I think, concur in establishing this matter of fact, that monarchy, I do not say absolute monarchy nor tyranny, was the first form of civil government. There are many passages to this purpose that might be collected, if it was worth my while. But there is one in the beginning of Aristotle's Politics so much in point that it must by no means be omitted. He says, "that regal government was the first, because they, who by their uniting formed the first states, had been before that time under the same regimen in families, which they afterwards continued in kingdoms."

I know that the power of these kings was limited, as their kingdoms were small in the heroical ages. But still they were kings, and not the less, but the more properly and the more

* Puff. L. vii, c. 5. † Plut. in Vita Lycur.

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truly such, because they were restrained from being tyrants. When Justin says that in the beginning of things the government of people and nations was monarchical,* he confirms the opinion I am of. When he says that the people were bound by no laws, and that the will of princes held the places of laws,† we must not imagine that these first monarchies were governments of mere will.‡ The tenor of tradition contradicts any such proposition. I might quote the authority of Thucydides, and others, against it; but I choose to quote that of Justin himself against it, who says, in the same place that it was not ambition, but a moderation tried and approved by all good men, that raised up princes to this dignity.§ Thus the Medes weary of that anarchy into which their families were fallen, chose Dejoces, a man famous for wisdom, integrity and justice, to be their king. It was not by virtue of their royal prerogative that these first kings gave laws written or unwritten, permanent or occasional; for it is probable, that in those ancient days there were few or no written bodies of law: and you can tell better than I can, whether Homer once mentions the world in his poems. But however this might be, the first kings had neither arbitrary nor legislative power by virtue of any real prerogative; on the contrary, they were chosen kings, because they were chosen legislators, and the goodness of the laws reccommended them to the throne and maintained them in it. The power of making laws was so far from being originally, and exclusively, annexed to monarchy, though it sometimes made monarchs, that Draco, who never was one, imposed his laws, which were said to be written in blood because of their extreme severity, on the Athenians; that Solon, who never would be one, repealed these laws, and established others; and that Pisistratus, who made himself one, far from repealing those of Solon, governed by them. The first kings were limited monarchs. They earned the sovereignty by great and good actions, held it from their people, and were accountable to their people for the exercise of it. Such I mean as came to their crowns by consent, and in countries where common utillity united families in civil society, and neither conquest nor the fear of it.

* Principio rerum, gentium nationumque imperium penes reges erat.

† Populus nullis legibus tenebatur, arbitria principum pro legibus erant.

‡ Just. l. i, c. i.

§ Quos ad fastigium hujus majestatis non ambitio popularis, sed spectata inter bonos moderatio, provehebat.—Ibid.

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XII.

The attempts which so many learned and ingenious men have made, with infinite labor of study, to fix points of chronology and history concerning ancient nations, that of the Egyptians particularly, have seemed to me, ever since I knew what they are, extremely ridiculous. They have seemed so the more, because some general and useful truths may be collected, without any trouble, from the broken and fabulous materials they employ with so much trouble, and to so little useful purpose. The original of the Egyptians and the order of their dynasties will never be known. The most ancient traditions, sacred and profane, supposing them all authentic, would be still insufficient for this end. But they are sufficient for another. They show us the nature of government, and the character of mankind in those early ages. They show us the first kings, and the primitive government of Egypt, such as I have described; and such they continued to be as long as their gods reigned, that is, as long as their kings pursued the true ends of their institution, and made their glory consist in the good government of their own people, not in the conquest of others.* Osiris and Isis civilised their manners, and taught them to sow corn and to plant the vine. The first Mercury taught them the use of letters, instructed them in the sciences and in arts, in that of physic especially, both for the body and the mind, and was, besides, their first or greatest legislator. Other Mercuries succeeded Thot. Cotta makes them five in all.† These explained the hieroglyphics of the first, improved on what he had taught in six and thirty thousand volumes or rolls, as some legends affirm, and completed that wisdom of the Egyptians wherein Moses was instructed; for no man, except a few, will believe that the daughter of Pharaoh sent into Greece to procure preceptors for her foundling.

The Egyptians were little known to the Greeks, from whom all our knowledge of them is derived, till the reign of Psammetichus, much more than a thousand years after the dynasties of their gods, and their golden age, as we may call it; and yet even then, the first principles of good policy and of a limited monarchy subsisted. They pierced through various revolutions of government, and maintained themselves in reverence during an

* Fines imperii tueri, magis quam proferre, mos erat. Intra suam cuique patriam regna finiebantur.—Just. ubi supra.

† Apud Cicer. de Nat. Deor.

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immense number of years. The same thing has happened, and by the same means, among the Chinese, whom I might have quoted for the same purpose as I quote the former; since their empire began as early, has lasted near three thousand years longer, and resembles that of Egypt in many respects; in these particularly, in a great reverence for antiquity, in a strong attachment to those primitive institutions by which the order of their government has been preserved, their monarchs, how absolute soever they may appear, have been restrained in the exercise of their power.

Now these governments, like all others which men have instituted, and to which they have submitted by consent, though they are artificial, are however instituted by virtue of the law of our nature, and are, in this sense, of divine appointment. That sovereignty, or supremacy, for such it may be called in a true sense, which was at first in fathers of families, not for their sakes, but for the sake of their offspring, and the propagation of the human species, belongs to one sovereign or supreme magistrate: to more than one, to the collective or representative body of the people; and sometimes to all these, according to the various constitutions of civil governments, which were indifferent before they were made, but cease to be so, and are obligatory on every member of the community, afterwards. There must be an absolute power in every civil society placed somewhere. As it is placed in one man, or in more, a monarchy arises, or an aristocracy, or a democracy: and, when it is divided between all these, a mixed government, which is, I presume, the best of the four. By this representation, so evidently true that no man who is in his wits can doubt of it, we may learn to despise and abhor certain venal or stupid writers in favor of monarchy.—Some of these would persuade, like Filmer, that Adam was an absolute monarch by creation; that his right has descended to kings; that all other men are slaves by birth, and never had a right to choose either forms of government or governors. Some again would persuade, like Hornius, whom Puffendorf* cites and refutes, that although men have a right to make covenants, and constitute civil governments, they have no power to confer sovereignty on princes. They may choose a king to govern them, that is, they may name a person on whom this sovereignty, this majesty, this power to govern which they cannot give, will descend, by a sort of divine emanation, from God, who can alone give them. Filmer's hypothesis will be always lame as well as absurd, till Adam's right heirs, for all other princes are by this hypothesis no better than usurpers, can be certainly distinguished.

* Lib. vii, c. 4.

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They would be so by Harry Martin's expedient, if they were born with combs on their heads, and every other man with a bunch on his back. But nothing of this kind has yet appeared among the phenomena of nature, and till it does we must content ourselves to acknowledge such kings as we have. The hypothesis of Hornius does not expose us to the same uncertainty, and we may know our king by much the same rule by which the Tartarians know their god. When a king is chosen, sovereignty and majesty descend immediately upon him, and he is completely a king. When a great lama is chosen, the soul of Foe enters immediately into him, and he is completely a god.—There are many more foolish and knavish hypotheses of the same kind; and the principal promoters of them, in every country, have been the clergy, whose flattery to princes had well nigh succeeded among us, so as to make the cause of tyranny, what it has been, and still continues to be made in other nations, the cause of God. But though we believe that monarchy was the first form of civil government, and that paternal government might lead men to it; yet may we believe very consistently, and we must believe, unless we resolve to believe against fact and reason both, that this, like every other form of government, is of human institution, established by the people, and for the people, and that no other majesty, since the word imposes so much, is inherent in it than that which belongs to the supreme power of every state, wherever that power is placed. Natural government was designed to last, and did last, till civil government became necessary. Nature instituted one, and directed human reason to the other. She meant the same in both cases, the good of the governed. Her institution and her direction could not have different ends. She intended, no doubt, that they who had been treated like children, under the influence of instinct, should be treated so likewise, under the influence of reason.

XIII.

I have said thus much, in order to show that political societies grew out of natural, and that civil governments were formed not by the concurrence of individuals, but by the associations of families. It is the more necessary to repeat and to inculcate this distinction, because, for want of making it, and by representing mankind to themselves like a number of savage individuals out of all society in their natural state, instead of considering them as members of families from their birth, and such too long to be at any time the solitary vagabonds of the other hypothesis, our best writers, even Mr. Hooker, and much more Mr. Locke,

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have reasoned both inconsistently, and on a false foundation. Inconsistently, because they sometimes acknowledge paternal government to have preceded civil, and yet reason about the institution of civil, as if men had been then first assembled in any kind of society, or had been subject to any kind of rule; for to say that the law of nature was of itself such a rule, and that every one of these independent inhabitants of the earth did, or might exercise justice for himself and others, on those who violated this law, was language unworthy of Mr. Locke, and unnecessary to his system, and yet it is the language of his second chapter in his second book of civil government. Falsely, becanse it is easy to demonstrate that mankind never was in such a state of nature as these authors generally, the best and the worst, have assumed, by demonstrating that the generations of men could not have been continued in such a state. It is impossible we should know, by history or tradition, how the first civil governments were established. It is so impossible, that if any history or tradition pretended to give such relations, they would lose deservedly all credit for this very reason. But we may guess with great probability, by analogy from what we know; and we may reject without presumption the whimsies, that speculative men invent in contradiction to this analogy, and to the visible constitution of human nature. "If we may not suppose men ever to have been in the state of nature," says Mr. Locke,* "because we hear not much of them in such a state, we may as well suppose the armies of Salmanasser or Xerxes were never children, because we hear little of them till they were men, and embodied in armies." But with submission to this great author, the comparison is not at all to his purpose, nor helps him in the least to answer the objection he supposed might be made to him. No man would be mad enough, most certainly, to deny that all these soldiers had been once children, though he neither knew them nor had ever heard of them in their childhood. But, to make the comparison apposite, no man should be able to affirm that all these soldiers had been members of other communities before they were embodied in these armies. The question is not, whether men lived together in the state of nature since the world was their commom habitation, but, what the state of nature was, whether it was composed of men who lived together in families, and whether these families, by uniting together, gave a beginning to political societies; or whether it was composed of as many solitary individuals as there were men in the world, and whether these men, independent and equal one amongst another, met

* Cic. Gov. c. 8.

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amicably together, and set up government without any better preparation for it.

Locke insists much on the natural equality and freedom of mankind; but he seems to carry his notions on the subject a little further than nature, and the reason of things, will allow. We may distinguish a personal and a social equality. Nature has been far from constituting the first, and the creatures of no other species are probably so unequal in this respect as those of the human. The utmost efforts of art cannot give them even the appearances of equality. But nature has really, if not so apparently, constituted the last; for the father was a son, and the son will be a father; the magistrate might have been a subject, and the subject a magistrate. Nature has determined nothing in these cases, and therefore these last destinations, when they are made with a partial inequality in these societies of men, are due solely to the folly of men, to their neglect of natural indications, not to the indications of nature, and to the imperfection of all human establishments; so that the reverse of them would take effect, for the most part, if the indications of nature were observed and followed. He who sits on a throne would inhabit a cottage, and he who holds a plough would wield a sceptre.

That all men are born to be free, is undoubtedly true; and therefore I think, that they never were in such a state of nature as Locke assumes.* His state of perfect freedom, so he calls it, would have been a state of war and violence, of mutual and alternate oppression, as really as that which Hobbes imagined to have been the state of nature. He distinguishes, indeed, between liberty and license, and supposes a law of nature in force to restrain the latter. But as he supposes, at the same time, that every man had an equal right to be the executioner of this law, as well as the judge, and to punish the offenders against it, not only for his own preservation, but in order to preserve mankind in general, it is plain that this hypothesis implies the same absurdities as the other, and that the state of mankind under the law of nature, according to Locke, would have been very little, if at all, better than the state of nature before there was any such thing as law, according to Hobbes. The pretence of law in one, would have done as much hurt as the want of it in the other; and it is easy to conceive what tyranny and oppression would have prevailed universally, if every man, besides being judge in his own cause, had been a universal judge and executioner.

Mr. Locke doubted not but his doctrine would seem very strange to some men; and, in truth, they must be very strange

* Ibid. c. ii.

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men to whom it does not appear such. He asks, however, before it be condemned, to have this question resolved, by what right princes or states can put to death or punish an alien for any crime he commits in their countries? The alien is not subject to their laws. They must punish him, therefore, by the law of nature; and, if by the law of nature every man hath not power to punish offences against it, he does not see how the magistrates of any community can punish an alien. This is the question, this the argument, and a sufficient answer may be given to both, without consulting Grotius, Puffendorf, or any of the oracles of law. Though an alien does not owe allegiance to the sovereign power of the country wherein he is an alien, because two distinct allegiances cannot be due from the same person at the same time; yet he is under the protection of that government, and a subject of it who should rob or murder him would be punished by the laws of it. He is therefore liable to be punished by the same laws, and it is not true that they who make them and they who execute them are to him, in such cases as these, men without authority. The laws that concern men as denizens only concern him not, for he enjoys none of the advantages peculiarly and exclusively attributed to denizens. But the laws that are necessary to preserve the peace and good order of a community concern every man who lives in it, and the alien submits himself voluntarily to them when he resolves to do so. He can be entitled to protection on no other condition. He accepts this condition: he is punishable therefore by his own consent, and the municipal laws, not the laws of nature alone, condemn him justly. But if the former did not speak to him, if he was not bound to hearken to them, as Locke affirms too generally and too rashly, would there be no difference between the right which he assumes to belong to every man by nature of punishing offences against her laws, as this man soberly judges the case to require, and that right which a court of justice has to proceed by stated rules, that reason authorises, and general consent approves, against an alien who violates at once the particular laws of a community and the universal laws of nature? Would there be so little difference that one could not stand without the other, nor the conduct of princes and states in punishing aliens in these cases be justified; unless this strange doctrine were admitted? I think no man who is capable of reflection will be of this mind. But thus it happens to men of the greatest genius, when they grow to be overfond of an hypothesis. They pursue the trains of their abstract, that is their general ideas, wherever these carry them. Thus they are led to maintain propositions so little conformable to the real constitution of things, that he who reasons less on general notions, and confines himself more to observe

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this constitution in every particular, will have frequent occasions to discern a wide difference between the speculations of philosophers and the original invariable system of nature.

I am not as much persuaded as Mr. Locke was, that all political societies began from a voluntary union. Many of them did, and I think that this union was a voluntary union of families in societies that may be called legal, because they were made according to natural and divine appointment; for those, that may be called illegal, will fall under another consideration. I think thus because the most early traditions, and the most ancient as well as modern histories, even those that are cited to prove the contrary, show me mankind not only in their childhood, but in their manhood, assembled in families before they were so in civil societies. Joseph Acosta, who is cited by Locke, says, "there was reason to conjecture, that the people of Peru had neither kings nor commonwealths for a long time." But how did they live during this time? Were they so many individuals scattered about the country without any form or appearance of society? By no means. They lived in troops, as they do at this day in Florida, and we know how the people of Florida and North America live at this day, by a multitude of persons, missionaries, and others, who all represent them as tribes or families, that observe the precepts and customs of their ancestors, that have public assemblies for consultation wherein their elders preside, and that give the supreme command over them, in time of war at least, to persons they elect, as other savages submit to the more permanent authority of their caciques. I think it evident beyond all contradiction, from observing the constitution of human nature, physical, and moral, that mankind could not have subsisted, nor have been propagated, if men had been ever out of society, and that having been educated till their years of discretion in it, though they might possibly but rarely change societies, they would never go out of society, nor could become such unassociated independent creatures, as they are supposed to have been by the other hypothesis, till they became members of some political society. I think it easy to conceive how men were prepared, by living in natural, to live in political societies, and impossible to conceive how strolling savages, who knew no subordination, nor had been accustomed to observe any rules of social life, could be picked up one by one, as it were, and reduced at once under the laws of any civil government. Whenever this was done, paternal authority had, no doubt, a great share in determining their families to unite with one another; but if we believe that the consent of every family was collectively taken, we shall assume no more than what is actually practised among the savages on every occasion, of making war

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and peace, of huntings, and transmigrations from one settlement to another. In short, I think, as tradition, history, an analogy to what passes in some sort before our eyes, and the actual constitution of human nature lead me to think; whereas much abler men are led into different extremes, to support different hypotheses. To support the divine right and absolute power of kings Filmer advanced the silly and slavish notion of royal fatherhood. Silly, indeed, as well as slavish, it must be reputed; since though the power of the father was, on many accounts, greater and lasted longer than that of the mother, and since he could not therefore have talked of royal motherhood, if it had served his purpose, with as much seeming propriety as of royal fatherhood; yet is it certain that even the paternal was a temporary power, as it has been explained above, and that when it continued longer than the minority of children, this was due to gratitude, to habitual reverence, or to circumstances of conveniency, and, in no sort, to any natural right that the father had. To deduce, therefore, from hence a right and power, such as Filmer would ascribe to kings, is perhaps one of the greatest absurdities that was ever committed to paper. A very commendable zeal to explode these false notions of government, and to assert the cause of liberty, carried Locke into another extreme, very unnecessarily, as I apprehend. He assumed the state of nature to be such as could never exist, and the method of establishing civil societies to be such as could never be executed. Will it be said that he meant only to give an abstract system of the natural rights of mankind? I shall ask, if it be said, to what purpose it was to make any abstract system of rights, that never did nor could exist, and of a method of establishing civil government that never could be taken? It could serve surely no other purpose, than to give us a notion of natural liberty very different from the real constitution of nature, by which we are less able to preserve liberty without some sort or other of government, than we are liable to lose it by the abuse of government. I shall ask, in the next place, whether the right of mankind to be governed by law, and not by will, under every form of civil government, be not as well established by referring the original of all these forms to the consent of men, assembled in families, as to the consent of men dispersed, God knows why, after having been educated in one kind of society, and assembled, God knows how, to establish another.

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XIV.

As it is much more reasonable to judge, in all cases, by a consideration of the actual constitution of human nature, than to run the risk of mistaking what is true by imagining what may be so; it is likewise both reasonable and necessary, on the subject spoken of here, to look as far back as we have any light on the natural and political state of mankind, in which review we shall find sufficient inducements to think that the state of nature was not a state of anarchy but a state of government, and that some form or other of it subsisted at all times and in all places, however these forms may have varied. We distinguish between natural and political society; but the real difference between them is not so great as we imagine. Nature instituted the former, but we cannot doubt that reason and experience improved it, without changing the form, from time to time, as the circumstances of families altered. When these were altered so far that the same form would do no longer, men altered the form itself. They kept nearer to it in some societies, and went further from it in others. The institution ceased to be that of nature, it became that of art. But in all other respects there was no more reason, perhaps, to say, whenever and wherever this happened, for it would be ridiculous to assume that it happened every where at once, that a new state of mankind arose in those places and at those times, than there has been to say so on every great revolution of government since, when monarchies have changed from elective to hereditary, when aristocracies or democracies have been raised on their ruin, or mixed governments on those of all three.

Mention has been made of the Egyptians, who appear to have been, if any people we know of were such, the Aborigines of their country. The accounts which history gives of their political constitution, and those anecdotes which tradition has preserved concerning the original of it, incline, and almost determine, one to think that it was formed in the manner which has been assumed of forming political societies for mutual advantage, or common defence; that the union of families composed several small dynasties, and the union of dynasties one great empire; that it was so formed on principles of common utility, and without the insociable design of invading others, till Sethosis, or Egyptus, or Sesostris and other conquerors arose, who invaded the nations of Africa, of Asia, and even of Europe, as the Ethiopians and Arabians invaded Egypt. The other great empire, the Babylonian or Assyrian, of which the

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Grecian antiquaries, who knew nothing of China, relate so many wonders, seems to have been formed in another manner.

Lawyers speak of illegal communities of bodies of men who unite under certain conditions, and become societies to break all the rules of sociability; to rob, and to plunder, like the ancient Greeks spoken of by Thucydides, or the modern Arabs and Tartars. Some of these have never settled in civil governments. They have gathered from time to time, like vapors into clouds, have produced storms, marked their course by devastation, and done great, but transient mischief. Other confederacies there have been, as illegal as these in their institution, designed to invade the possessions of others, and to form political societies by conquest against the laws of nature, instead of forming them by compact agreeably to it.

As I assume with more probability on my side than such hypotheses have generally, that the reigns of the most ancient kings of Egypt were called the reigns of the gods, on account of the wise laws and institutions by which they promoted the peace and happiness of that people; so we may assume, that the Assyrian empire was founded and supported, from the first, by violence. Who Nimrod was, or Belus, or any of those that have been named in the variety and uncertainty of traditions, among the founders of this empire, when they lived, and what they did, it is impossible to say. Even Marsham, who labored this point so much, with all his sagacity, and all his learning, left it, as he found it, in the dark. But as Nimrod stands represented in the Mosaical history, a mighty hunter before the Lord, he gives us the idea of a warrior; and we may believe, without straining the sense of ancient anecdotes too much, that Bel, Belus, or Baal, who was so sanguinary a god, had not been a king of great moderation, nor had acquired power by persuasion rather than by force, by the arts of peace than by usurpation and war. Justin says, that Ninus was the first, not to make war, but to change the nature of it,* and to extend his empire by subduing his neighbors. The Egyptian Sesostris, and the Scythian Tanaus much more ancient, had made war for fame alone, and, content with victory, had abstained from empire.† Their kingdoms, which each nation reputed to be the most ancient of the world, and which were so perhaps of the world they knew, had been established long before these wars begun. Arts and sciences were more improved among the Egyptians: primitive simplicity among the Scythians. But it is probable, that neither of them engaged in wars, till self defence made them necessary, or till the ambition of their princes gave occasion to them.

* Avitum gentium morem. † Contenti victoriâ, imperio abstinebant.

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Then Sesostris harnessed monarchs to his chariot. Then the Scythians imposed a tribute on Asia, rather as the trophy than the reward of their victory.* The first Assyrian kings, on the contrary established their monarchy by force, in an age when the illegal confederacy of a few families was sufficient to give the most forward, and the most popular man amongst them, the title of a mighty hunter, and the means of forming a political society on a principle of ambition, and by usurpation on the other little states, unskilled, and unable to resist: "rudes ad resistendum."

There must needs have been a multitude of numerous families, or little states, in these early days, and in the countries we speak of here, since Joshua conquered one and thirty kings in the land of Canaan. It is easy, therefore, to conceive how such a man as we assume Nimrod to have been, on the authority of Scripture, and Belus after him, if they were different persons, for that one was the Saturn and the other the Jupiter of the Greeks is not so very certain; that such a man, I say, might unite by consent both men and families of men, as fierce as himself, in confederacies to invade others. Whatever use they made of this, whether they contented themselves to conquer and to ravage, or whether, as they had united by consent, they obliged their neighbors to unite with them by force, it seems that Ninus profited of their success to do the last. He extended his dominion by victory, and as he extended it, he confirmed it. Thus the Babylonian empire was founded by force of arms, and thus it was maintained; till as force had raised it, force destroyed it, and illegal confederacies put an end to what illegal confederacies had begun.

If we consider the true ends of society, to which the general nature and reason of things direct mankind, we shall find it hard to conceive how they could be induced to unite their families on any other motives than those of common utility, and common defence, against the little robbers that have been mentioned; or how, when a superior force made them safe from these, they should choose to become great robbers themselves, and to invade and conquer as if their happiness had depended more on subduing other governments than on a wise and just constitution of their own. But if we consider the particular nature of man, wherein there is one principle that directs him agreeably to the general law of nature, and another which is nothing more than the impulse of appetites and passions that are of subordinate use in the human economy, but were not designed to be the laws of it, we shall easily conceive how the

* Magis in titulum imperii, quam in victoriæ præmium.

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conduct of mankind has become in these cases, and almost in all others, repugnant to nature, reason and their own common sense.

The first impressions that are made on societies, like those on particular men, last long, and the worst longest. The character of a few eminent persons, nay of some one who has acquired fame, authority, and power, especially if he has had the legislative in matters religious as well as civil, becomes that of a nation, grows confirmed by custom, and passes for natural and reasonable in despite of nature and reason. This happens in particular states, and this has happened in the great commonwealth of mankind. If some men have been deified for the good, many have been so for the hurt they did; and conquerors, the most noxious of all animals, have become objects of adoration. However unlike nations may be to nations in their dispositions and manners, all of them, even the weakest, seek their own advantage real or imaginary, at the expense of others. Thus have the civil societies of men acted towards one another from their primitive institution; for if some set the example, the others soon followed it, and whilst every particular state has gone through various forms of government and revolutions of fortune, the universal state of mankind has been little less than a state of perpetual anarchy. Families kept men out of that state of individuality which Hobbes, and even Locke, supposes. But political societies have been always individuals.

SECTION XV.

Besides the two manners that have been mentioned, in which civil societies were formed, there was a third very near akin to the second, that came into frequent use, when the numbers of people increased in some countries faster than their industry, and the order of their government made provision for them; or when, for some other reason, the greatest part of a community, and the sovereign power in it resolved to drive out a smaller part that they judged noxious to the whole. This manner of establishing new gevernments when it was done by force, and it was seldom done with the consent of the invaded, was full as illegal, relatively to the law of nature, in the invaders, however softened by pretences of necessity, as the second. It was more bloody too, when they who defended their ancient possessions were more able to resist, and they who sought new habitations were more numerous than either of them had been, when kingdoms and states were first formed, and colonies were first planted. The inhabitants of Gaul were grown so numerous,

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that in the very beginning of the Roman empire, in the reign of the elder Tarquin, the Celtic Gauls, who sacked Rome two hundred years afterwards, began to send their colonies abroad, at the instigation of their king Ambigatus.* He thought it necessary to exonerate his kingdom over crowded with people, "exonerare prægravante turbâ regnum." He authorised the expeditions, by setting his nephews at the head of them, by giving them commissions to settle wherever the gods should direct by auguries, "in quas dii dedissent auguriis sedes," and by levying such formidable armies for this purpose as no nation should be able to resist, "ne quæ gens arcere advenientes posset." This account, that Livy gives of the Celtic invasions, may serve, in some sort, for those which other nations made on the Roman provinces, long after his time, and in the decline of that empire. The Ostrogoths, the Visigoths, the Vandals, and the Lombards, to whom the Franks, although an assemblage of adventurers perhaps, rather than one people, may be added, were the principal nations, who broke down the barriers of the Roman empire, and who established themselves in several provinces on the ruins of it. They were all detached to seek new habitations, from the various and numberless families and societies of people who inhabited Scythia, that is the immense extent of country beyond the Rhine and the Danube, as far as the Baltic northward, and the Euxine and the Caspian, at least, eastward. We know little about them, whilst they remained in their deserts, and that little is very confused, and no doubt very fabulous. But this in general is certain, their numbers increased so much in every society, and the fertility of the country, which every society possessed, as well as their skill to improve it, was so little proportionable to the wants of such numbers, that they were continually sending forth new colonies to seek new habitations, one at the expense of the other, driving and driven out by turns. The same necessity, and the same habits of invading continued when the Roman empire, divided by Constantine, and weakened by his Christian successors, was no longer able to repel their incursions. They had too, besides necessity, another strong temptation at this time. The expeditions they undertook, were in themselves more inviting than any of the former, "haud paulò lætiorem viam dii dabant," as Livy says, when he compares that of Belovesus into Italy, with that of Sigovesus into the Hercynian forest. They removed to better climates, to countries more fruitful, or more cultivated, as well as more adorned than their own; and the surprise of Athanaricus, king of the Visigoths, who had made a peace with Gratian for presents, and principally for

* Liv. lib. v.

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victuals, when he came to Constantinople, at the invitation of Theodosius, is nothing less than surprising, although Jornandes describes it to have been extreme.

A multitude of examples might be brought of kingdoms and states, that arose from such transmigrations as these, of Greeks, of Phenicians, and of other people. Sometimes they were formed by agreement, a few instances of which are to be found in history and tradition, but much oftener by violence, and sometimes by such circumstances of cruelty as were sufficient to exterminate the lawful possessors; one instance of which, besides those already pointed out, requires a particular mention in this place. It is not only to be reputed more authentic than any other, because it makes a part, and a principal part of sacred history, but it is more full and more marvellous in all the particular circumstances of it, and shows another occasion, besides that of a too great increase of people, on which one part of a community was desirous to seek out new habitations, or was compelled to it by the other. The wandering family of Abraham, that had hovered long about Egypt, and had gone thither often for bread, to the want of which these pastors were much exposed, settled in that country at last, under the protection of Joseph, and continued in it above two centuries. That they did not attempt to establish a government of their own in it, like other strangers who came from barren into fruitful countries, is easily accounted for by the smallness of their number, as well as by the situation of Joseph, and their relation to him. But it is not so easy to account for the patience with which they bore, after the death of Joseph, a cruel servitude of fourscore years, to which the tyranny of the Egyptians had reduced them, when their number increased in every generation so vastly, that they could bring, at the time of the exode, six hundred thousand fighting men into the field. This very increase might seem incredible in any other history, notwithstanding the calculations that have been made, to show that it does not exceed the natural multiplication of a people, among whom polygamy and concubinage are established. But admitting these immense numbers, and this extreme patience of the Israelites, naturally impatient, rash, and unruly, to be consistent; admitting that the expectation of a promised land, whereof their father Abraham had taken possession for them, by erecting altars in it, as the Spanish adventurers took possession of several countries in America, by erecting crosses in them, which they conquered afterwards, and claimed by virtue of this right of possession to belong to them; admitting this expectation, I say, as an additional reason why the Israelites submitted to their bondage so long, and made no attempt to establish an independent kingdom

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or commonwealth in Egypt; yet will it be hard to conceive how they could find it so difficult to withdraw themselves out of this country, when Moses determined them to it. An army of six hundred thousand men was sufficient to have conquered Egypt. The Arabians probably, and the Persians certainly conquered it with a less force than they might have employed merely to march out of it.

Such considerations may lead one to think, that the accounts pagan authors give of their exode are not wholly fabulous, and that is an example in point of the case I assumed, the case of people driven out of some communities, because they were for some reason or other not only burthensome but noxious to them. The Israelites were not guilty of sedition nor rebellion. They bore their stripes patiently. But as their stripes made them willing to leave the country, an epidemical infectious distemper in the lower Egypt might make Pharaoh desirous to drive the inhabitants of that part of his kingdom, into the neighboring deserts; and if he followed them to the Red Sea, it might be rather to recover the jewels and the vessels of gold, and silver, which they had stolen under the pretence of borrowing, than to stop them and to bring them back. Tertullian* has preserved a tradition which favors this supposition; for he relates that the Egyptians sent messengers to Moses in the desert to demand restitution, that the Israelites on their side demanded to be paid for their labor whilst in servitude, and that an account being stated, the balance seemed to be much in favor of the latter. Thus you see the Egyptians robbed the Israelites, not the Israelites the Egyptians, as it has been thought.

Mr. Selden has given us the same story,† and two others as they are told with some little difference in the Babylonian Gemara, and a book called Beresith Rabba. This over-learned writer does not decide whether the facts are true, or whether they are rabbinical inventions, "ingenii rabbinici figmenta." They deserve, however, to be mentioned, because of their immediate relation to the anecdote just now quoted from Tertullian, and to the right the Israelites had to the land of Canaan. The anecdote is much the same. The scene where it passed, and the persons among whom, are alone changed. Josephus and others after him and like him, have sounded high the reverence and munificence, "reverentiam atque munificentiam," says Selden, which Alexander the Great showed to Jaddus the high priest, and to the whole nation of the Jews when he received them under his protection, for they purchased his protection, much as

* Adv. Marcionem, lib. ii, c. 20.

† De Jure Nat. et Gent. juxta discip. Ebræor. lib. vii, c. 8.

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the priests of Jupiter Hammon did, one by flattering prophecies, the other by a flattering genealogy. Three controversies, then, were decided in their favor at the tribunal of this prince against the Egyptians, the Africans, and the Ismaelites, or Arabs, according to the rabbins, those great compilers of Jewish traditions. The Egyptians demanded restitution of the silver and gold which they had lent to the Israelites, about a thousand years before at the time of their exode, and insisted on the passage where Moses says that God gave his people favor in the eyes of the Egyptians.* But Gibeah ben Pesisa, the famous lawyer, who was council on the other side, pleaded that six hundred thousand of the Israelites, having served the Egyptians four hundred and thirty years, the former had a just demand on the latter for this service; and this debt, which was computed for a time so much longer than that of the bondage of the people of Israel, and for numbers so much greater than theirs at any time perhaps, but certainly during the far greatest part of the time, that they were even known to the Egyptians; this debt, I say, we may well believe exceeded the value of a few jewels, and vessels of gold and silver, and some raiment, or old clothes, that they carried away with them. In short the Egyptians were condemned, in this suit, at Alexander's tribunal. So were the Africans who demanded the land of Canaan, as the estate of their father Canaan, and therefore their inheritance. The lawyer of the Jews quoted the curse, pronounced against the son of Ham, more unfortunate than guilty; asked if the possessions of slaves did not belong to their masters; insisted that the Africans were still such to his clients in equity, though not in fact, and sent them away in confusion. The cause of the Ismaelites who pretended to be co-heirs with the Israelites came on last, but they were soon silenced by producing the will of Abraham, as Moses recorded it, and in which the patriarch gives all his estate to Isaac, except some legacies to the children that he had by his concubines. Well might Selden say, that these suits were of a wonderful nature, "miræ sunt hæ disceptationes forenses," wherein both sides agreed to have the cause decided by arguments drawn from the law of the Jews, from their history, and from their interpretations of both, without any regard to a prescription of so many ages. But it is time that I return to speak of the manner in which the Israelites proceeded in the acquisition of new habitations, and in forming not only one commonwealth the more in the world, but the most singular establishment ecclesiastical and civil that ever was formed; for

* Deum dedisse gratiam populo in oculis Ægyptiorum, ut postulata concederent eis, seu mutuo darent quæ ipsi peterent.

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such it must be allowed to have been, unless any one shall think that it appears to us more singular than it really was, because we do not know all, as we know some of the laws, customs, and pretensions of other ancient nations.

When I include with the Israelites in this transmigration, many of the other inhabitants of the Lower Egypt, and suppose that a common distemper rather than a common religion, unless that religion was idolatry, united them in it, nothing is assumed unreasonably, as every one, who considers how little fit the Israelites, so prone to idolatry themselves, were to convert others from it, must agree. But whatever the religion of his mixed multitude of Israelites and Egyptians was, before they put themselves under the conduct of Moses, they became the same people in this, and in every other respect afterwards. They entertained the same hopes, and marched with confidence under the same leader to conquer new habitations. Well might they march with this confidence, when miracles accompanied them in one continued series, and it is even surprising that they should despond at any time, after the first miracle had been wrought at the passage of the Red Sea, though Josephus goes out of his character on this occasion, and instead of magnifying diminishes the wonder, by comparing this passage to that of Alexander's army, who marched on the strand, or waded through shallow water along the Pamphylian coast.

There were besides the miracles many circumstances in this famous transmigration of the Israelites, which deserve our notice for their particularity. One of these is so much to the present purpose that it must be mentioned. The Israelites remained forty years in the desert, before they undertook the conquest of the promised land, a time sufficient to wear out the leprosy, if they were afflicted with that distemper, as profane history asserts, the authority of which must not be lightly rejected, since Jews and Christians both are so glad to lean upon it, whenever it serves to explain or confirm any point of sacred chronology or history, and since the impertinence of thinking it sufficient for that purpose, and insufficient for any other would be too gross. There is another reason given, in the history ascribed to Moses, why the Israelites were kept so long in the desert. When they came to the borders of the promised land, they mutinied, distrusted God, who was already declared their God, their King, and the general of their armies. They threatened to choose another leader and to return to Egypt. Upon this provocation it is said, that God resolved to keep them, as he did keep them, wandering in the wilderness till the whole generation, of twenty years and upwards, except Joshua and Caleb, was dead. Then, and not sooner, they passed the Jordan.

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To this reason, founded solely in the anger of God, may we not presume to add another, which proceeded from political considerations? When I say political considerations, I mean those of Moses, not those of God. Far be it from me to account for the reasons on which the economy of Providence proceeds, when these reasons are not plainly revealed to me in the word, or works of God. Far be it from me even to assume that infinite wisdom is directed by considerations of human policy. But it is neither licentious, nor profane, to guess at those which the lawgiver of the Jews might have, and I shall do it on this occasion without any scruple.

As soon as Moses had brought the mixed multitude into the desert, the decalogue was given, and other laws were published. He kept them in this station more than a year, and during that time the sanhedrim was established, many laws, political, judicial and ceremonial were promulgated, and an entire system of religion and civil government was formed. All these institutions were enforced, not only by miracles, but by a most rigorous punishment of offenders; witness, among several, that massacre which the Levites made of three thousand men in one day, when they were commanded, without any other form of proceeding, to take every man his sword, and to slay his neighbor. Seven or eight and thirty years of such government as this, of a theocracy, wherein Moses, who conversed familiarly with God, spoke in his name, and delivered and executed his orders, could not fail to make strong impressions, and to form strong habits in a new generation of men, who had been bred up under it. To confirm these impressions and these habits, at the end of the fortieth year, just before the death of Moses, this legislator renewed the covenant, so it was called, between God and this people, repeated the law, exhorted them by promises and threatenings to a strict observation of it, and sent them forward, not to conquer and subdue, but to exterminate a whole race, who were devoted by God to destruction, and whose country had been given to his favorite people, the Israelites, some ages before, even before they were a people.

Other nations, those, for instance, who established new governments in several provinces of the Roman empire, conquered, and subdued, but did not seek to exterminate. The Franks proceeded thus in Gaul, the Visigoths in Spain, the Ostrogoths and the Lombards in Italy. Driven out of their old habitations by force, or by want, they sought for new ones in better climates, and countries more fruitful than their deserts. Their spies visited the lands they designed to conquer, and as that "which flowed with milk and honey" tempted the Israelites, those that abounded with bread, and fruits, and wine invited them. But

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when they had defeated all opposition by the force and terror of their arms, they ceased to be enemies, and the victorious and the vanquished soon became one people. They mixed together, and lived under common laws. But this could never be the case between the Israelites and any other nation. The first principle of their policy, ecclesiastical and civil, was unsociability, and accordingly, their manners were rendered unsuitable to the common nature and genius of mankind, as that great divine, Dr. Barrow expresses himself, in his exposition of the creed, "They were a chosen people, they were holy, and the rest of mankind profane." God dictated their law, he instituted, nay, he administered their government, for which purpose he resided amongst them, and the Levites carried him before them in a wooden trunk, between the cherubim,* as your priests pretend to carry him about in a gold or silver box. In a word, as abject as this people had been in Egypt, Moses had taught them to think more highly of themselves in the desert, and they came out of it the most unsociable nation upon the earth. So unsociable that they could be nothing less than tyrants when they conquered, nor any thing better than slaves when they were conquered. This has been their case, too. Their traditions boast a few centuries of prosperity and triumph; but in almost all ages, before the coming of Christ as well as since, they have been what Tacitus calls them, "vilissima pars servientium." As they were formed to this character of insociability and inhospitality in the desert, so they came out of it, like beasts of prey, thirsting after blood. The Huns, begot by devils, who inhabited Mount Caucasus, on Scythian witches,‡ showed less inhumanity, when they were conducted by a hind, whom they followed as a guide sent them by the gods, into Europe.† Attila extended his conquests farther than Joshua; but it may be doubted whether he shed more blood. More cool blood he did not most certainly. Attila gave quarter often, Joshua never; and the five kings who hid themselves in a cave at Makkeda, and who were murdered by the latter, after he had destroyed their armies, and made himself master of their country, would have been spared by the former. It was criminal among the Israelites in his time, and it was so much later, to be content with conquest, and with spoil, or to show mercy to those they had robbed.

By such a conduct as we have described, agreeably to the Scriptures, this Egyptian colony established itself in Palestine, and formed a civil society in the last mentioned manner. There

* —— Arca cherubinis instructa, dei vehiculum, et præsentiæ suæ pignus. Spen. de Theo. Jud.

† Iorn. Hist. Got. ‡ Ibid.

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was not above one city I think with whom they made peace. None escaped the edge of their swords, except such as they could not conquer, and such as found refuge in foreign countries. Some found it among the Phœnicians, for to say that the Phœnicians descended from these refugees, is to affirm what neither has been nor can be proved. Some found it in other countries, in Africa very probably,* since Procopius speaks of pillars that remained in the Tingitana with this inscription, "we are they who fled from the face of Joshua the robber, the son of Nane." Thus you may see how the prophecy of Noah was fulfilled, which seems so plain to Bochart, and other great scholars, and which is so little intelligible in the terms and in the application of them. But whatever becomes of the prophecy, the conquest of Canaan by this colony from Egypt is the strongest example that can be produced, of the mischiefs brought on mankind in the establishing of civil societies by violence, and therefore much to my present purpose.

XVI.

Though the establishment of civil societies originally, and the maintenance of them since, have caused, in the order of Providence, perpetual wars, and much of that misery which injustice and violence bring on the world, "tot bella per orbem, tam multæ scelerum facies," yet the necessity of establishing and maintaining them arises from the constitution of human nature, and is therefore indispensable. The great commonwealth of mankind cannot be reduced under one government, nor subsist without any. Just so we may observe, that the laws and constitutions of particular societies are every where various, in a multitude of instances opposite, and in many absurd. Laws and constitutions are however necessary to be made, and, when they are made, to be kept; so that we may apply to these cases a passage in Terence, much more properly than it is applied by Grotius in favor of absolute power,† "aut hæc cum illis sunt habenda, aut illa cum his amittenda sunt."

But now since the law of nature tends to promote the peace and happiness of mankind, and since this law is immutably the same at all times, and in all places, for which reason Aristotle compared it to fire, that warms or burns alike in Persia and in Greece, how comes it to pass that the means prescribed by it, answer the ends of it so ill? The answer is short, but full.

* In Vandalicis.
† De Jure B. et P. l. i, c. 3. Ter. Heaut.

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Because these means are employed by men whose imperfection is such, that all they do must be, of course, imperfectly done. Whether they are compounded of two substances, or no, may be doubted, but that they have in one substance or one nature, two principles of determination, cannot be doubted. Affections and passions excited by immediate objects of apparent good, are therefore continually in action and are excited independently of the will, which they determine afterwards. But reason is a sluggard, that cannot be so excited. Reason must be willed into action, and as this can rarely happen when the will is already determined by affections and passions, so, when it does happen, a sort of composition generally follows, between the two principles; and if affections and passions cannot govern absolutely, nor even subject reason to serve as their instrument, they require and obtain more indulgence from her than they deserve, or than she would show them if she was entirely free from their force, and free from their seduction.

These reflections, which have been touched upon already, may account for the unnatural manner in which the law of nature has been executed by civil societies, and for the absurd manner in which it has been copied, and improved too, as they pretend, by civil laws. Had the reverse of all this been done in a closer conformity to the law of nature, the moral state of mankind had been truly paradisaical, but it would not have been human. We should not have been the creatures we were designed to be, and a gap would have been left in the gradation of created intelligences. The tables of the law of nature are hung up, as it were in the works of God, and are made obvious to the sight of man, not because he is able to observe them in their whole extent and in every part alike, but that he may keep them constantly in view, and depart as little as possible, in the midst of so many infirmities and so many temptations, from them. God has shown us wherein our wisdom, our happiness, and the perfection of our nature consist; and he has left us to pursue these ends by the use of our reason. But reason not being given to all alike, and being very imperfectly given to those who possess the greatest share, our wisdom and our happiness are very imperfect likewise, and the state of mankind is, upon the whole, a very imperfect state. We look up much higher than we are able to rise.

Whatever violations of these laws may have been frequently committed, by particular men, and upon particular occasions, none that were deemed to be such, and perhaps few that might be called such strictly, have been enacted into laws, or have grown up into established customs by the plenary, or less plenary permission which civilians speak of, one of which gives a right to do, and the other exempts from punishment for doing.

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I scarce believe, on the credit of ancient and modern authors, many of the stories which are told concerning the manners of people, whom they call savage or barbarous. But if I believed them all, I would still maintain that there were in Greece, and at Rome, as many things repugnant to the law of nature enjoined or at least permitted, as can be produced from the relations we have of the people of Colchos, of the Massagetæ, or of the Getulians; and further, that if there are not in our civilised and enlightened age as many, there are some that exceed, in injustice and inhumanity, all that we are told of Iroquois, Brasilians, or the wildest inhabitants of African deserts. The great and principal difference lies here. Our legal violations of natural law have a solemn varnish of policy, and even of religion, which the casuists of the law and those of the gospel throw over them, and which always disguise, although they cannot always hide them. Illiterate savage nations have no such varnish to employ, and their laws and customs appear to every eye but their own, as unnatural and abominable as they really are. To this it may be added, that they who can write have a great advantage over those who cannot, in all such cases. They can extenuate and exaggerate matters of fact, and they seldom fail to do it, with no more regard to truth than is necessary to make the falsehood pass. If we had the history of Canaan written by a Canaanite, that of Carthage by a Carthaginian, or that of Mexico and Peru by a Mexican and Peruvian, figure to yourself how the hospitality, the fidelity, the innocence, and simplicity of manners, of all these people, would be exemplified in various instances, and what further proofs would be brought of the ferocity, the treachery, the injustice and cruelty of the Israelites, the Romans, and the Spaniards, of the first and the last especially.

It has been said, that "the tables of natural law are hung "up in the works of God, and are obvious to the sight of man." They are so. They are so obvious, that no man who is able to read the plainest character can mistake them, and therefore no political society ever framed a system of law in direct and avowed contradiction to them. No not even the Jews, who might think, and who did think, that they had little concern in the law of nature; since the author of nature had given them a particular law. They might justify their neglect of the former, in much the same manner that Omar justified the order he gave for burning the Alexandrian library; and, by what some of their rabbins have said, they seem to do little else. If the law of nature contains nothing more than the written and oral law of Moses, it is unnecessary, might they say, and the saying would be worthy of them. If it contains anything which is not in the law of Moses, or which differs from that, it ought to be de-

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stroyed. But, however, they acknowledged in some sort a law of nature, since they acknowledged a law antecedent to that of Moses, and given to all the sons of Noah.

Upon the whole, the law of nature is too evident, and too important not to have been always the law of laws. Such it has been reputed, and as such it has been respected, not only by the most famous legislators and philosophers, but by those who made the first rude essays towards the establishment of civil government. Inward consciousness and outward observation, could not fail to make it known to them, and to the fathers of families, or the patriarchs of mankind before them. The errors about it, and the contradictions to it, that abouud, and have always abounded, in the laws and customs of societies, proceed from causes of a very different nature, and very consistent with all that has been said of it. The law is plain, but the precepts it contains are general. Reason collects them easily from the whole system of God's works, from the constitution of human nature, the consequences of human actions, and the invariable course of things. But then to make the greatest part of these general precepts as useful to human kind as the divine lawgiver intended them to be, reason has a further task assigned her. Reason must be employed to make proper and necessary deductions from these precepts, and to apply them in every case that concerns our duty to God and man, according to the different relations in which we all stand to both, and the different places we hold in society.

Now human reason being at best as fallible as it is, and having been as little informed by experience as it was in the early ages, when mankind began to gather into political societies, a multitude of false deductions and wrong applications could not fail to be made; for nothing can be more true than this observation, that the difficulty of applying general, and even common notions to particulars, is one great cause of the errors and misfortunes of mankind. These deductions and applications were made diversely among divers people, and every one accepting those of their own growth, for true dictates of nature and reason it is easy to conceive what numberless prejudices they produced, and how the laws, customs, opinions, and manners of nations have been rendered as various; and as opposite in the very same respects, as they are and have always been. These prejudices for so they may be properly named, were at first universally, as they are still in many parts of the world, the prejudices of real ignorance. Those of fantastic knowledge succeeded these, wherever men advanced from simplicity to refinement, "a necessariis ad elegantiora;" and which of these have most hurt may be disputed. Thus much is certain. There were prejudices of

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superstition to corrupt religion, and prejudices in favor of licentiousness and of tyranny, both to corrupt the first principles of civil government, and to perpetuate error: so that when men of different families and countries, and all fraught with different prejudices, mingled one way or other in the same societies, it is no wonder that their systems of religion and government were such as we find them in all ages.

The confusion was so great that the laws of nature, and those of positive institution, were but ill distinguished, and that some, or all, of the first kind passed for laws of the second, whilst some of the second passed for laws of the first. Such examples may be found, particularly among the Jews, about whom, of all the ancient nations, we are the most concerned to be inquisitive, and of whom it is hard to say whether their traditions, or their reasonings upon them, are most precarious. They acknowledged in some sort, as it has been said, a law of nature, since they acknowledged a law antecedent to that of Moses, and unwritten precepts of universal and perpetual obligation. The rectitude of these precepts is manifest, and unknown to no man, "Rectitudo est manifestior, utpote nemini ferè non agnita," as Mr. Selden says,* speaking after the rabbins. But these precepts were not collected by human reason, from the constitution of nature. They were revealed by God himself to Noah, the Jews affirm, and were designed for all his posterity, as they were renewed to the Israelites, at the station in Mara, with a precept about keeping the Sabbath, and other additional precepts. I enter into these particulars in order to observe only, what an unnatural jumble this people made of seven principal precepts, which composed, according to them, a code of natural and universal law, and the original source of all law, "primordialem legem et matricem omnium præceptorum Dei."† There is nothing, perhaps, more absurd nor ridiculous in the whole Jewish system.

No doubt can be entertained whether the law of nature forbids idolatry, blasphemy, murder, theft, and, I think, incest, too, at least in the strictest sense of the word, and in the highest instance of it. But surely none, except rabbins, could have blended up with these a precept that forbids the eating the member of a living animal, which is such a piece of cruelty, that I shall not believe on the word of Maimonides, of Arnobius, or any other author, that the kings of the nations, or the most enthusiastic bacchanals, did it in the celebration of their idolatrous feasts, nor even that the Israelites, who were so prone to spill blood, were as fond of swallowing it in this filthy manner, fresh and reeking. This circumstance alone would be sufficient to

* De Jure Nat. et Gent. juxta, &c. l. i, c. 10. † Ibid.

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prove, that the "præcepta Noachidarum" were an invention of the Talmudists, whose practice it was to forge, and who wanted skill and knowledge to make their forgeries probable. A natural law against a practice, to which there is no inducement in human nature, although men are carnivorous animals, is most rabbinically, that is, impertinently, assumed. He must be a rabbin too, who is able to discover how a precept, to regulate judicial proceedings, can be said to have made another head of natural law. Selden* treats of this in the last place, because he thinks it relative to the other six, which would have been given in vain, if judgments had not been established to punish the violation of them. But how could all these judgments be established by one of these seven precepts? By judgments the Talmudists understand all constitutions, customs, actions, circumstances, decisions, and law cases, which are of moment in criminal causes. It would be too ridiculous to suppose judgments, in this sense, established by a single precept of the law of nature. What did this precept then command? A tribunal to be erected for the trial of all offences against these laws, or a council-chamber wherein new laws, for enforcing these, should be made?† Or did God by one precept of natural and universal law confirm and ratify all future judgments that should be given, and all future laws that should be made by human authority, to secure the observation of six other precepts? I can think so the less, because the judgments of his chosen people were often repugnant to the law of nature, truly so called in particular instances; and because, in general, a spirit of injustice, which established one rule for themselves and another for every other person, ran through all their judicial proceedings.

Another instance of that confusion which arose in men's notions concerning laws of nature, and laws of positive institution, might be drawn from the decree of the first Christian council, in which the apostles and elders imposed no other load on the converts from paganism, than abstinence from things offered to idols, from blood, from things suffocated, and from fornication, according to the copy we have of it; all of which, as well as circumcision, and other observances from which these converts were exempted, made parts of the Mosaical institution.‡ But it appears by ancient manuscripts, and by the citations of Irenæus, and Cyprian, as well as by other authorities, that another duty which was not most certainly of Mosaical institution, and was

* Lib. vii, c. 4.

† —Domus Judicii nunc pro tribunali aut foro—nunc pro loco aut coëtu, quo sanciuntur novæ leges—sumitur.—Id. ib.

‡ Selden, lib. vii, c. 12.

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plainly a moral obligation arising from the real law of nature, had been contained in the original decree. The converts were to abstain from doing to others what they would not that others should do to them. This instance, and the former, might be more explained. But enough has been said on these two subjects, and we may proceed to take notice of those instances wherein things are, and have been, forbid by civil or ecclesiastical laws, which are not only permitted in the fullest manner by the law of nature, but seem much more conformable to it than the institutions opposed to them: and of others wherein things directly forbidden by the law of nature are, and have been, permitted, or commanded, by civil or ecclesiastical laws, and by both.

XVII.

That the human, like every other species of animals, should multiply by the copulation of the two sexes, and be propagated by their care to nurse and breed up their young, is undoubtedly a law of nature. Self-love, the great spring of human actions, prompts to both. But as it is more immediately determined, and more strongly stimulated by instinct, and by nature, to one than to the other, it became necessary to give this principle, by reason and by art, all the additional strength that could be given them, or, at least, to let it lose none that it had. For this purpose it was necessary, that parents should know certainly their own respective broods, and that, as a woman cannot doubt whether she is the mother of the child she bears, so a man should have all the assurance law can give him, that he is the father of the child he begets; for a likeness of features would not amount to a sufficient assurance, though I have read of a country where women were common, and where paternity was ascertained no other way. Thus matrimony forms families, which could not be formed without it; and families form states, which could not be formed without them. It was this first and natural union which preceded, and prepared mankind for political or civil union, and the bonds of this second union were more effectually strengthened by those of paternal and filial affection, and consanguinity, than they could have been by those alone of accidental interests liable to vary, and of covenants liable to be broken. On such principles, and for such purposes I presume that matrimony was instituted. They are evidently derived from the law of natnre. The institution therefore is conformable to the law of nature, as far as it is subservient to these ends. But when it is carried further than these ends require, and that

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which is consistent with them, or even conducive to them, is forbid, it is, in every such respect, a mere arbitrary imposition.

Great attention has been had in every well constituted government, to promote the multiplication of mankind, and this attention must be always necessary; for if the human race is daily increasing, it is daily decreasing likewise, and it would be trifling to maintain that celibacy is less hurtful, or polygamy less necessary than they were formerly, on Cumberland's vain assumption that the earth is sufficiently peopled. Men who were advanced in years, and had never been married, were stigmatised at Sparta; and as well there as at Rome, and in many other places, great immunities, prerogatives, and other encouragements were granted to those, who had a large legitimate issue. The Talmudists carry the obligation of getting children so far, that they declare the neglect of it to be a sort of homicide. "Quincunque Israelita liberis operam non dat, est velut homicida."*

Two sorts of polygamy are distinguished by the civilians.—That of one man who has several wives, and that of one woman who has several husbands. All the ends of matrimony are answered by the first. It has therefore prevailed always, and it still prevails generally, if not universally, either as a reasonable indulgence to mankind, or as a proper, and, in the early ages, a necessary expedient to increase their numbers. Such it is, no doubt, such it must be, in the order of nature; and when we are told that it has not this effect among the people who retain the custom at this day, either the fact asserted by men who cannot be competent judges of it, may be untrue, or sodomy and abortions, in conjunction with other unnatural causes, may prevent the natural effect of polygamy. The ends of matrimony are not answered by the second, which has been, I suppose, a double polygamy, wherever it has been practised; since we cannot believe that the superior sex ever submitted their prerogative to the inferior, and that several men became the property of one woman, although mention be made by Strabo of the Sabeans, among whom one woman was the wife of a whole family. She lay with the eldest all night, and drudged on with the rest all day. Other examples of the same kind might be quoted from modern travellers, who speak of some countries where every woman is married to seven husbands, and of others where the wife may, and the husband may not, call in assistants to the bed, by which custom the prerogative of the ancient patriarchs would be reversed in favor of woman, and they would have, if I may say so, their male concubines. But, to proceed on the

* Selden, Uxor Ebraica, lib. i, c. 9.

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more probable hypothesis: the divine Plato approved, the Spartan lawgiver instituted, a community of wives, and Cæsar reports, that there were in our Britain certain amicable societies of both sexes, wherein every woman was the wife of ten or twelve men, and every man the husband of as many women. The most admired philosophers, the most famous legislators, and several of the least civilised people, Britons and others, admitted the same absurd abuse of matrimony, and destroyed one end at least of its institution, by making the ascertainment of fathers impossible, as Diodorus Siculus* says, "that of mothers too was made by a nation in India, where the children were changed as soon as born."

The first sort of polygamy, for the second was too contrary to nature and good policy to spread wide, or to last long, was allowed by the Mosaical law, and was authorised by God himself. There is, indeed, a very loose restraint laid on a king, in the seventeenth chapter of Deuteronomy. He is not to multiply wives, lest his heart should be turned away; neither is he to multiply greatly silver and gold. Moderation was prescribed in both passages: but wives and wealth, suitable to the kingly state, were implied in both. The number of one, and the quantity of the other are not determined. They were left, probably, to the judgment of the king himself, for whom the law was made: but the rabbins, who made many arbitrary laws of their own, under pretence of interpreting divine laws, as other rabbins have continued to do, thought fit to limit the number of queens, or of queens and concubines both, to eighteen; the ridiculous reasons for which specific number may be seen in Selden's treatise, called "Uxor Ebraica."† By the same authority priests were allowed to have but one wife, and all other persons but four; the reason for which number it is more easy to imagine, than to express decently.

The zeal of the Jews to promote the observation of the precept to increase and multiply, was so great, that besides the establishment and regulation of polygamy, their doctors descended into many particulars for the same purpose, and among the rest were careful to appoint stated periods, beyond which it was not lawful to neglect the performance of conjugal duty in any form of life. The periods were marked even to the artificer, the countryman, and the seaman; and the wife had her remedy if the law was not observed. The prodigious numbers, of which this nation appears to have consisted, from the exode to the destruction of their city by Titus Vespasian, and the constant reparation of these numbers after so many massacres,

* Lib. ii. † Lib. i, c. 8.

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captivities and other desolations, must be ascribed, as I think, if we believe them to have been real, to that prodigious and constant increase of people which a well ordered polygamy caused.

The writers, who pretend sometimes that polygamy has not the effect ascribed to it, employ, at other times this very increase as an argument against it. But surely the argument, as well as the pretence, is false. Increase of people must be always an advantage, and can never be hurtful to any state, no nor cumbersome to particular families, unless the want of order, good policy, and industry make it so. To talk of a commonwealth sinking under its own weight by the increase of people, as Puffendorf does in one place,* might have appeared reasonable to those ancient nations of Europe and Asia, who sent so many colonies abroad for fear of starving at home, and would, I question not, appear so at this time to the nations of Africa, who sell their children not only to procure themselves brandy and tobacco, or other wares, but to prevent an overstock of inhabitants. The truth however is, and it may be easily demonstrated, that numbers of people are strength and wealth to every country, and that the law of nature, which directs the increase of them, is in this instance what it is in all others, the law of good policy.

Thus therefore the matter stands. This sort of polygamy is quite conformable to the law of nature, and provides the most effectual means for the generation and education of children. In the other state, mankind may multiply perhaps as much in the first instance of begetting, but not in the second of breeding up, for want of an equal ascertainment of both the parents: and this defect may disappoint, to a degree, the intention of nature. Monogamy, on the other hand, or the confinement of one husband to one wife, whilst they both live, for I shall use the word in this sense here, will unite the care of both parents in breeding up subjects of the commonwealth, but will not serve as effectually, nor in as great numbers, to the begetting them. The prohibition of polygamy of the first kind, is, therefore, not only a prohibition of what nature permits in the fullest manner, but of what she requires too in some manner, and often in a greater degree than ordinary, for the reparation of states exhausted by wars, by plagues, and other calamities. The institution of the second sort contradicts her intention in one part, as the institution of monogamy diminishes the effect of her law in another part. The prohibition is absurd, and the imposition arbitrary.

The imposition is very ancient: however, if it be as ancient in Greece as Cecrops, and if this kind of matrimony was the

* Lib. vi, c. 1.

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most perfect, as many assert, there would be reason to wonder how the most perfect kind came to be established by an uninspired lawgiver among the nations, whilst the least perfect kind had been established by Moses, the messenger, and prophet of God, among his chosen people. The Romans took many things from the Greeks, as well as from the Etrurians, at the foundation of their monarchy, although Pythagoras was no more the cotemporary of Numa, than he was the scholar of Ezekiel. But from whomsoever they took the institution of marriage, the matrimonial tables, and the oath which every married man was obliged to take before the censors, declared it to be for the procreation of children; and they made laws occasionally to encourage this procreation.

If Lycurgus, on whose principles every child was the child of the commonwealth, deemed it expedient for improving the several broods, that his citizens should cross them, by lying with the wives of one another; and if the ephori obliged one of their kings to take a second wife, when he would not part with the first, who was barren, the Romans needed to have made no great scruple of borrowing wives, to increase or to mend their race, and Cato is said to have lent his Marcia to Hortensius. Nay, Cæsar intended to procure a law, which one of the tribunes had orders to propose, and by which every one should be authorised to take as many wives as he pleased, and such as he pleased, "liberorum quærendorum causâ." The passage may, indeed, have another sense; and if Suetonius, from whom it is taken, wrote—"uxores—quas et quot vellet," instead of "vellent," it must mean that Cæsar intended the new prerogative for himself alone, as the occasion that introduces the anecdote, and the circumstance of directing the law to be proposed when he should be absent, "cum ipse abesset," may incline one to suspect. But, on the other hand, nothing can be more probable than this, that Cæsar considered, besides the constant waste of Roman citizens, which the exposition of infants, and perhaps the severity of paternal power, but certainly their ordinary state of war occasioned, the extraordinary loss of people, which the commonwealth had sustained in his time by proscriptions, and a long course of civil war. It is probable that he considered this, and it is therefore much more wonderful his successor should not think, after another proscription, and another civil war, of establishing polygamy, to repair these accumulated losses, than that he, the first Cæsar, should. This was not done, however, nor was polygamy established among the Romans before they were Christians. It was less likely to be so afterwards, and if Valentinian married two wives, and gave leave to his subjects to do the same, by a public edict, as the

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ecclesiastical historian Socrates says he did, his example was not followed. We may doubt too, whether that of Socrates, the philosopher I mean, was followed on the same occasion at Athens. Diogenes Laertius* relates, that the Athenians decreed, when their city was depopulated by war and sickness, that every citizen might have, to increase the number of children, a second wife, besides her who was called his town wife, and of which sort he could have but one.† Socrates took the advantage of this decree, which set aside the law of Cecrops, and he despised, with a great elevation of mind, those who criticised his conduct, and threw out reproaches against him. This famous missionary of natural religion and law declared by this action, that polygamy was against neither, and that the law of Cecrops had forbid what they allowed.

XVIII.

The reasons that determined the lawgivers of Greece, and Rome, and of some few other states, to forbid a plurality of wives, which was permitted in almost all countries, may have been such as these. They saw that polygamy would create large families, and large families a greater expense than could be borne by men who were reduced to live in cities, and other fixed habitations, where property was distinguished, and where no one could afford to spend more than his legal possessions, his labor, and his industry, gave him. Monogamy was a sort of sumptuary law, and might be thought the more reasonable, because, even in those countries where polygamy was established, men were not permitted to marry more women than they were able to maintain.

Another reason, that served to confirm this institution, was the part assigned to the priests in it. Dionysius Halicar.‡ having observed how ill women had been used to keep their conjugal vow, even in countries where a very singular magistrate,§ a magistrate to preserve their chastity, was appointed, speaks with great encomium of a law that Romulus made to attach every Roman wife to her husband, by an entire participation of all his possessions and of his religious rites.‖ These sacred nuptials were celebrated by a solemn sacrifice, and by the eating together of a consecrated barley cake. The natural effect of this law and

* Vit. Socrat.

† —Uti urbanam quidem unam uxorem cives ducerent, liceret autem et ex alterâ procreare liberos.

‡ Lib. ii, 24, 25. § — Cui mulierum castitas curæ esset.

‖ — Omnium et bonorum et sacrorum.—

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this religious ceremony was such, that during five hundred and twenty years there was no instance of a divorce at Rome; for so I understand the historian, who does not refer, according to my apprehension, to any express prohibition of divorces, in the case even of these marriages, by the law that established them as some have imagined. Thus monogamy became, by the intervention of the priesthood, a religious, as well as a civil institution. I might add, not improperly, nor untruly, that this institution has received at least an indirect support from the vices of husbands and wives, from those very abuses which it was designed by Romulus, and by other legislators, to reform. By entering into single marriages, men satisfied the natural desire of propagating their species, and acquired the means of having a legitimate issue; whilst nothing hindered them, nor their wives neither, except the want of opportunity, from indulging their lust with others, in spite of their sacred bonds, and the legal property they had in one another's persons. We may believe the more easily, that such considerations helped to reconcile pagans to the seeming constraint of single marriages, since we can make no doubt that they have the same effect on Christians, who think these marriages instituted by God himself immediately, as many of the former deemed them to be enjoined by the law of nature; for what authority does in one case, custom might very well do in the other: and it is much less strange that custom, which we call a second nature, should pass for the first and real nature, than that human authority should pass for divine.

But of all the reasons, by which we may account for the prevalence of single marriages, in opposition to polygamy, divorces constituted the principal and the most effectual. With them monogamy may be thought a reasonable institution. Without them it is an absurd, unnatural, and cruel imposition. It crosses the intention of nature doubly, as it stands in opposition to the most effectual means of multiplying the human species, and as it forbids the sole expedient, by which this evil can be lessened in any degree, and the intention of nature can be, in many cases, at all carried on. Although the first mention of divorces be made by Isaiah, and Jeremiah occasionally, seven or eight hundred years after the law was given, they had been always in use among the Israelites; and as the right was derived, by their doctors, both from the natural and the Mosaical law, so they were practised under no very strict regulations. I say nothing of the forms. The legal causes had a great latitude: a divorce was sufficiently authorised when a woman did not find favor in the eyes of her husband, because of some turpitude in her person or behavior, or even because he found another woman whom he thought handsomer, or whom it was more convenient

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to him to marry.* Thus the people of God had an advantage, in this respect, over other people. Plurality of wives might have made divorces less necessary. The defects in body or mind of one, would be compensated by the perfections of the others; or if they proved all alike disagreeable, the husband had the resource of concubines. The case of the Romans, and all those nations where single marriages were established, was very different. He who had a barren wife could not fulfil the law of nature, nor swear without perjury, as he was obliged to do, that he kept a wife in order to have children by her; and therefore Carvilius Rugat acted very conscientiously when he was the first, if he was the first, to put away his wife. The law casuists, who decide that barrenness is not a sufficient cause of separation, because it may be the misfortune, but cannot be imputed as the fault of the woman, might as well decide, that no accidental infirmity, which renders a man incapable of performing his office in the state, is a sufficient reason for removing him. The Romans paid no regard to such casuistry. They continued divorces in this, and many other cases; such, for instance, as ill management of family affairs, or an intolerable and incurable ill humor, which were the reasons, I presume, of Cicero's divorce from Terentia; and good reasons surely, since the husband may be ruined by one, and the peace of his whole life be destroyed by the other.

The institution of divorces was of such absolute necessity where a plurality of wives was forbid and of so much conveniency where this plurality was allowed, that it continued on the same foot among the Romans, till Christianity was established fully in the empire, and that it continues still among the Jews in the East, if not practised, for prudential reasons, in the same manner, and as openly, in the west.

Selden gives a very particular account, in the third book of his "Hebrew Wife," of the occasion on which divorces were restrained, and it amounts to this. Hillel and Sammæas were of that set of men, the rabbins, who pretended to have authentic traditions, and certain interpretations of their law conveyed down to them from Moses; and who were, notwithstanding this oral rule of faith, of doctrine, and of manners, frequently in opposition, and at the head of different factions in the schools of the Jews. Two such factions had been formed, concerning the legal grounds of divorces, by Hillel, and Sammæas who had been his scholar, as Gamaliel, the master of Saint Paul, is said to have been his nephew and his successor; and the disputes ran high between

* Fœditatem personalem, negotium impudicum. Si invenerit aliam pulchriorem, aut sibi commodiorem.—Seld. De Ux. Ebraic.

† Dion. Hal. ubi supra.

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them whilst Christ was on earth. The Hillelians maintained the original right of repudiation, and such as it was practised, not only in the case of adultery, or turpitude, but in every other other case, "ob omnimodam rem seu causam."* The Sammæans insisted on a reformation of this custom, and on a new interpretation of the law founded on a grammatical cricicism.— They confined the right of divorce to the case of turpitude, alone. Christ decided the question in favor of the latter, and specified but one kind of turpitude. This decision appeared so strange to his disciples, that they were at a loss, as well as the Pharisees, to guess why then Moses had established the right of divorce; for it is probable the notion had not prevailed amongst them, that God tolerated superstitious practices, or permitted even crimes to have the sanction of his law, as in the present case it is said that he did, because of the hardness of heart of their fathers.

The disciples therefore cried out, that, if this was the case, it would be better not to marry. The Jews did not submit to this decision. The same dispute continued many years; and about seventy from the birth of Christ it was decided in favor of Hillel by that oracle from heavcn, "the daughter of the voice,"† which was heard at Jabne, not far from Jerusalem, and the place perhaps where the sanhedrim was then held. But the law of grace was superior, in time, to the natural, and the Mosaical law, among Christians. It had a right to be so; and, besides, we may believe very probably, and very piously, with Justin the martyr, that Joseph, having suspected the holy virgin to have been got with child before her marriage, had entertained thoughts of separating from a wife whom he could not keep according to the laws of his country.‡ We may believe too, on the foundation of this anecdote, that Christians were prepared to understand the words of Jesus in a sense the most restrictive of divorces, and the least favorable to that institution. I said, that the law of grace was superior in time to the other; for as little as we know what the practice of Christians was during the first three hundred years, we know in general, that great relics of Judaism remained long amongst them; that divorces were in use, even those which wives signified to their husbands; that the meaning of the word fornication was extended from the flesh to the spirit; and that this institution was observed, admitted, denied, to the time of Constantine, without any certain rule at all; "aliter atque aliter,"§ says Selden. From that time downwards, emperors published edicts; councils made decrees; fathers, and after them schoolmen, advanced opinions; ecclesiastical and principally papal power

* Ibid. l. iii, c. 20.
† Filia vocis.
‡ Juxta patrios mores ejiciendam.
§ Ibid. c. 28.

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increased; a new jurisprudence, the child of usurpation, of ignorance, and bigotry, grew up under the care of the canonists; marriage was declared a sacrament, and this tie indissoluble.

XIX.

Before we leave the subject of positive laws, ecclesiastical and civil, that forbid those things arbitrarily, and by mere will, which the laws of nature permit; we may properly enough take notice of some restrictions relatively to marriages, which have not been so hard to impose as the obligation of single marriages. Polygamy had been allowed in most nations, divorces I believe in all. It required time, therefore, to abolish institutions, both of which had revelation and reason on their side; and the last of which had been confirmed by universal practice. But it required neither time nor pains to continue the prohibition of marriages within certain degrees of consanguinity and affinity. The Jews, among whom Christianity arose, held such incestuous marriages to be forbidden as much as adultery, sodomy, and bestiality. The Greeks, and the Romans, among whom Christianity had the greatest increase, and the firmest establishment, seem to have held different opinions, at different periods, about the remoter degrees, but not to have varied about those in the ascending or descending lines; and the Romans, who made one state, were more uniform on this head than the Greeks, who were divided into many, and whose country produced many a whimsical philosopher that affected law-giving besides Plato. The nations among whom no regard was paid to these degrees, but brothers mixed with sisters, fathers with their daughters, and sons with their mothers, were held in abomination, like all other nations, by the Jews, who were in return held in contempt by these and all others. These, and all others, were deemed barbarous by the Greeks and the Romans; so that their example might well have, as it had, no effect, in this respect, either on the Jews, the Greeks, or the Romans; though two of them, at least, the Egyptian and Babylonian, had been masters of the former in every sense, and though the second and the third had received the first principles of all their knowledge, and perhaps the first use of letters, from the same, either immediately like the Greeks, or mediately through the Greeks, like the Romans.

That the abhorrence of incestuous marriages should prevail among the Jews, is easily accounted for, since they founded it on a positive law of God. But how it came to prevail among the Greeks and the Romans, is not so clear. Was it founded among them on a law, and is it even an instinct of nature?

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This has been said, but cannot be maintained. They scarce deserve an answer, who would prove these marriages prohibited by the law of nature, on the supposition that there is a repugnancy in nature to any such copulations; as if consanguinity, like fire, produced an agreeable sensation at certain distances, and pain and abhorrence at a nearer approach; as if a multitude of nations, civilised and uncivilised, could have been determined to act unnecessarily against so strong an instinct of nature, as this repugnancy or abhorrence is assumed to be; and finally, as if the first men, who could not increase and multiply without committing incest, had been commanded to do it by the author of nature, against the law of that nature he had just before given them.

A great deal of dull pains has been taken to inquire into the nature of shame, and to discover the motives of that modesty with which almost all mankind, even the most savage, conceal the parts, and remove out of sight to perform the act of generation. How comes this about, say such writers, "when the propagation of so noble a creature as man is itself a work of honor and credit?"* The question might be sufficiently answered by saying, that the parts destined to this pleasant and honorable use, are destined likewise to uses that are offensive to our senses; and that they show, by the necessity they are of to our being in one destination, and to the propagation of our species in another, a certain mortifying identity of nature with the vilest of the animal kind. These parts are placed, as it were, out of the way in the human fabric; and, in conformity to this indication, the custom of hiding them, and of retiring from the sight of others when we employ them to any purpose, has grown up in both sexes, and been confirmed by education. "Hanc naturæ tam diligentem fabricam imitata est hominum verecundia."† Shame or modesty, according to Tully, makes us imitate nature in this instance; but I think that the latent principle of this shame, or modesty, is a vanity inherent in our nature, derived from an opinion of excellence and dignity. It is this that makes us fond of showing, wherever we can show it, how superior we are to other animals, and to hide, wherever we can hide it, how much we participate of the same nature.

Other reflections might be added to these, such particularly as furnish reasons for the solitude wherein the two sexes affect to copulate; among which perhaps an uncontrolled and undisturbed indulgence to their mutual lust would not be found the least. But to what purpose should this be done, when there is nothing in the assumed shame, even if we allow it to be natural, that

* Puf. l. vi, c. 1. † Cic. Offic. l. i.

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has any more relation to incestuous than to other marriages? The shame of exposing their secret parts, and of copulating in public, was, to be sure, just as strong in those who contracted the first, as in those who contracted the second; and it is impossible to conceive that it can cause any natural abhorrence of one of these conjunctions more than of the other, or indeed of either. It remains therefore that this abhorrence is artificial, and that it has been inspired by human laws, by prejudice, and by habit.

But though this be evidently true, yet is it true likewise, that the degrees spoken of are to be distinguished; for though the prohibition cannot be deduced, in any of them, from instinct, or animal nature; yet it is favored by reasonable nature in some. The permission that her laws give to conjunctions necessary to the propagation of the species of animals, may be conceived to be in the human less, and more full, or absolute, according to the received distinction of legal permissions that I have somewhere mentioned. The conjunctions of fathers with their daughters, and of sons with their mothers, if they are thought permitted, must be thought to be so by the lowest sort of natural permission, not only for the reason Socrates gives in Xenophon, the disparity of age, from which he supposed, not weakly, as it has been objected, but wisely, and providently, that several inconveniences would arise; but for a reason of more importance and of universal extent. The first societies, and those which compose all others, are family societies. These are natural, and the better they are regulated the more easily and the more surely will political societies, whose component parts they are, be put and maintained under good regulations. Parents are the chief magistrates of families, and every thing that tends to diminish a reverence for them, or to convert it into some other sentiment, diminishes their authority, dissolves the order of those little commonwealths, and introduces a licentiousness of manners, which they carry with them and diffuse in the greater. This now must happen in some degree wherever the custom prevails, that fathers take their daughters, and sons their mothers for wives or mistresses, whenever they do it actually, or may do it lawfully. I need not stay to prove and to illustrate this; but may conclude on what has been said, that if natural law does not directly prohibit such conjunctions as these, it does not permit them neither in so full a manner, as to give them that sanction which other marriages, that are reputed to be contrary to the law of nature, and that are called alike incestuous, have.

The marriages of brothers and sisters, for instance, which stand in the very next degree, may be objected to, as they may be defended, by probable arguments drawn from political con-

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siderations; but no color of an argument can be drawn against them from the constitution of nature, in which all her laws are contained, and by which they are all promulgated. It may be said, and I find that something of this kind has been said, that the intention of reasonable nature being not only to strengthen the bonds of society as much, but to improve sociabilty among men and to extend it as wide, as possible, in opposition to that insociability which is so apt to grow up between distinct families and states, those positive laws which forbid marriages in near degrees of consanguinity and affinity, are conformable to nature, and drawn by necessary consequences from her laws. For this reason it may be said, that such marriages were forbidden among several of the most civilised nations in the pagan world, and that we find so many prohibitions in cases of affinity, as well as of consanguinity, in the eighteenth chapter of Leviticus. The more remote degrees were prohibited perhaps to fence in, and to secure the better an observation of the nearest; and this might be the more necessary because of the precedent practice of mankind, who had been constituted by God, at the creation, in a necessity of committing what was now forbidden, since they could not otherwise have obeyed his first and great precept, to increase and multiply. Eve was in some sort the daughter of Adam. She was literally bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, by birth, if I may call it so, whereas other husbands and wives are so in an allegorical manner only. But to pass this over, the children of the first couple were certainly brothers and sisters, and by these conjunctions, declared afterwards incestuous, the human species was first propagated. If you accept rabbinical authority, you may believe that Eve brought forth constantly twins, a male and a female, as pigeons, I think, are said to do; so that Cain might marry the twin sister of Abel, and Abel the twin sister of Cain. Whether this institution alters, and softens the case, any more than that of the Lacedæmonians, who were permitted to marry their sisters on the mother's side, but not on the father's; or than that of the Athenians, who might by law, or who did by custom, marry their sisters on the father's side, but not on the mother's, as we find by the example of Abraham and Sarah, it was reputed lawful to do in the days of the patriarchs, let the great casuists of law and gospel decide. It may be said on the other hand, that, if it be agreeable to the law of nature and of right reason, in many cases, to extend the bonds of society by a prohibition of marriages between persons too near akin, it is in many cases at least as agreeable to this law, to preserve possessions and wealth in the families to which they belong, and not to suffer them to be carried by any female caprice into others. Precautions to this effect have been taken by

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wise legislators; and that which Moses took is remarkable in all its circumstances. He had made a law, on the application of the daughters of Zelophehad, "whose cause" he is said to have "brought before the Lord,"* by which if a man died and had no son, his inheritance was to "pass unto his daughter."† But when the chief fathers of the families of the sons of Joseph came before Moses and the elders of Israel, to complain of this law, the precaution we speak of here was immediately added, and the law amended. Moses declared in the name of God, that "every daughter who possessed an inheritance" by virtue of the former law, should be obliged to marry one of the family of the tribe of her father, and no other: and the reason is annexed, "that the children of Israel may enjoy every man the inheritance of his fathers." In obedience to this law, the danghters of Zelophehad "were married unto their father's brother's sons."

It is evident on the whole, that marriages, within certain degrees of consanguinity and affinity, are forbid by political institutions, and for political reasons; but are left indifferent by the law of nature, which determines nothing expressly about them. The laws of nature are general; and in this case, as in all others, the particular application of them, and the means of securing their effect, are left to human prudence. "Increase and multiply" is the law of nature. The manner in which this precept shall be executed with greatest advantage to society, is the law of man. When the latter promotes the execution of the former, without breaking any other general law of nature, it is conformable to this law. This may be done, and has been done, by different institutions of marriage. Which of these is the most effectual relatively to the precept of increasing and multiplying, and at the same time consistent with the whole tenor of natural law, reason and experience must decide. In the mean time, we may venture to assert, that the most effectual to this purpose, under this condition, whichever it be, is the most conformable to nature, though it be not a law of nature. To marry among our kindred, or to marry strangers, is equally effectual to the propagation of the species, although polygamy and monogamy may not be so: and therefore since there are political reasons for and against the marriages referred to, the prohibition of either is merely arbitrary. It may be expedient on some occasions; but however the prohibition turns, it is a law of will that forbids what the law of nature permits. As occasions are various, circumstances different, and will above all uncertain, so have these restraints on marriage been very inconsistently laid. In some

* Num. c. 27. † Ibid. c. 36.

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places or times, it was unlawful to marry a sister by the father's, and in others by the mother's side; or it was lawful to marry a cousin-german, and not an aunt, as among the Jews by their Mosaical law. But the most ridiculous of all these inconsistencies, is to be found in that great repertory of inconsistencies and absurdities, the rabbinical system of religion and law. When a Gentile became a "proselyte of justice,"* he became, according to this system, a new man, and lost all his former relations by this regeneration. He could not be affected, therefore, by the law that forbade the marriage of a mother, a daughter, or a sister, for he had none; and yet the prohibition was extended to him by the blundering casuistry of the rabbins, as it may seem, even when these relations were doubly dissolved, and the mother, the daughter, or the sister was a proselyte of justice, as well as himself.

XX.

After saying thus much of ecclesiastical and civil laws, that forbid what the laws of nature permit, something must be said of those which permit, or enjoin, what the laws of nature forbid, such things as are in direct opposition not only to reasonable nature, but to physical instinct. Sodomy was permitted among several nations, and if we dare not say that the moral Socrates practised it, we may say that the divine Plato recommended it, in some of his juvenile verses at least: and yet sodomy is very inconsistent with the intention of nature, which can be carried on by the conjunction of the two sexes only. Of bestiality I say nothing, because I do not remember any proof that it was used by any people except the Israelites, who must have been very prone to this unnatural crime, since so great severity of law was necessary to restrain them from it. Castration and celibacy may be cited on this occasion. They are both contradictions to the law of nature; the first wantonly permitted, the second deceitfully and ambitiously commanded. The first makes obedience to the law impracticable, for two the most silly purposes imaginable, to provide guards for the seraglios of the east, and singers for the theatres of the west. The second came into fashion early in the Christian church, to speak of no other, under the pretence of greater purity, and was pleaded for, and practised by orthodox enthusiasts, as well as by heretics. But when the church, with the bishop of Rome at the head of it, made a bold, and successful push to be every where superior to the state, the celibacy

* Seld. de Jure, &c., l. 5.

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of priests became a coercive law. Gregory the Seventh made the whole clergy submit to it, and the council of Trent maintained it strenuously for the same reason of ecclesiastical ambition, that the religious society might be every where more independent on the civil, and less attached, by the ties of nature as well as of law, to the state.

There are other examples of the same kind, which cannot be brought without the utmost horror; because in them it is supposed impiously, against principles as self-evident as any of those necessary truths which are such of all knowledge, that the Supreme Being commands by one law what he forbids by another. The zealots among the Jews assumed a right to assassinate any Jew, or any other man, who should seem to them to violate by public and strong appearances . . . . "Speciebus aliquot facti atrocioribus,"* the sanctity of the divinity, of the temple, or of the nation.† Thus Mattathias,‡ in the fury of his holy zeal, rushed on the Jew who was about to sacrifice in obedience to the edict of Antiochus,§ and on the officer appointed to take care of the execution of the edict, and murdered them both. In this case the appearances were not equivocal, most certainly. In many they might be so, and were so most probably very often, as in that for instance of a priest who was supposed to perform his office without a due purification,‖ and who might be dragged out of the temple on this presumption by the young priests; too young to be employed in any other sacerdotal function, but to whom it was lawful to dash out his brains with their clubs. In all cases it was against the very essence, as well as forms of justice, to trust in any hands a power which none but enthusiasts would exercise. This strange power, however, was founded on their traditional or oral law; and the example of Phineas, who murdered Zimri and Cozbi in the act of fornication,¶ and the approbation which God is said to have given to this action, were brought to authorise the zealots in a practice which produced such scenes of horror among the Jews, even whilst they were besieged by a common enemy, as no other nation ever exhibited: such scenes as lions and tigers, provoked by hunger, and let loose together, would hardly have afforded.

If we take for granted all that we find related, and as it stands related, in the books of the Old Testament, we must believe that the all-perfect Being approved, and commanded on many par-

* Seld. de Jure &c. l. iv, c. 4.
† Sanctitatem sive numinis, sive templi, sive gentis.
‡ Ibid.
§ Maccab. Joseph.
‖ . . . . in immunditie sua.
¶ Num. c. 35.

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ticular occasions, the most abominable violations of the general laws of nature, which were his own at least, as certainly as any of those that could be given by immediate revelation, and more certainly than any of those which were assumed on the authority of Moses, or on any authority afterwards to be so given. Now this we cannot believe as theists; nor are we, I think, under any obligation of believing it as Jews, and much less as Christians. As theists we cannot believe the all-perfect Being liable to one of the greatest of human imperfections, liable to contradict himself. Nothing is more conformable to our idea of such a being, than to believe that human reason cannot account for the proceedings of infinite wisdom in a multitude of instances, in many of those perhaps which seem the most obvious to it. But nothing is, at the same time, more inconsistent with this idea than to believe that this Being perplexes his laws with apparent contradictions, or deviates from them like human legislators in the particular applications of them; and that God who never acts against the perfections of his own nature, commands his creatures to act upon any occasion against the perfection of theirs. If we try the whole system of the religion and policy of the Jews, by this rule, I apprehend that all the sophism which has been, or can be employed, with the help of begging the question throughout, will not be sufficient to acquit this system in many cases at the tribunal of informed and unprejudiced reason. The theist, as a theist, can never admit that laws, which are inconsistent with that reason, and process of reasoning by which he discovers, and can alone discover the existence and the will, relatively to man, of an all-perfect Being, were given at any time or to any people by this Being. He will never give up one for the sake of the other, nor renounce demonstration in the highest degree for probability in the highest, and much less in the lowest. All such laws, therefore, as are manifest violations of the laws of his nature, will be ascribed by him to man, not to God.

A large field of particulars opens itself. Let us confine ourselves to that on which we have touched already. One law of nature forbids murder, as well as one law of the decalogue. Another allows it as far as it is necessary to self-defence, and to the preservation of society, that is, to the maintenance of the whole system, of natural law. It will not be pretended I suppose, that these two laws contradict one another. They coincide in the same plan. The general and the particular law tend to the same purpose; they show the wisdom of the legislator by their consistency, and his goodness by their universality. It cannot be pretended with any appearance of truth, I am sure, that the same may be said of the Mosaical laws about murder.

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The whole system of the law of Moses, like the whole system of his conduct, was founded on murder, and the exceptions which he made, by particular laws in favor of it, to the general law against it, were so numerous, as to make this in great measure vain; which may be thought, without absurdity, not to be one mark of his divine legation. The thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy might find its place here; and many singular reflections might be made, concerning the precautions taken against false prophets, whose seductions could be of little force in opposition to a true prophet; and against dreamers of dreams, that could have little force in opposition to daily and almost hourly miracles, wrought in the sight of all Israel. Others might be made on certain precepts, from which I will suppose, candidly, that the inquisition established in your church has copied the instructions she gives to her familiars; and others again on a spirit of cruelty, that involves the innocent with the guilty, spares neither man, woman, nor beast, neither the brother, the son, the daughter, the wife, nor the friend, but makes of the whole chapter such an edict as could not be imputed to Attila, without doing injustice to the uncircumcised as well as unchristian king of the Huns. Such observations, I say, might be made, and be pushed to conviction; to inward conviction I mean, for there are those that will not own it when they feel it, but have recourse rather to trifling distinctions and dogmatical affirmations, the last entrenchments of obstinacy. In these let us leave them. Let it avail as much as it can avail, to say that the laws referred to, and written in blood, like those of Draco, were given to the Israelites alone; that the Israelites were God's people exclusively of all others; that he was their king by a particular covenant, as well as their God; that idolatry was in every Israelite a breach of this covenant, an act of high treason, a political crime, and fit to be punished as such; in a word, that on all these accounts God might give them such laws in the former relation, as he could not have given to them, nor to any other people, in the latter alone without contradicting, and obliging those who obeyed them to contradict, the general law of nature, whereof he was the author, and by which the punishment of individuals "in terrorem" according to their several degrees of guilt, not the undistinguished extermination of collective bodies, and especially for matters of opinion, is allowed. I have met with arguments of this sort employed to justify the Mosaical law. They will not be admitted by some, perhaps, because Moses made use of the same cruel, and undiscerning jurisprudence, on account of their idolatry, against the Canaanites, who had no such covenant with God, nor were the subjects of such theocracy; who were obnoxious to divine vengeance in no other respect than that

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which was common to them and all the heathen nations; and who had provoked the Israelites by no other injury than that of self-defence; that these laws were therefore in the mouth of Moses, and in the understanding of all the people, the laws of God as God, and not merely as king. But whatever be determined, the example is to my purpose. He who can persuade himself that God, as king of a particular people, whom, as God, he had separated from the rest of mankind, gave these laws to the Israelites, must still confess, that these laws are repugnant to those of nature, which will leave the difficulty much where he found it. He, who, instead of resting on this distinction, confounds the king and the God together, as Moses and the Israelites certainly did, is reduced to the necessity of owning, what no sincere and consistent theist can own, that the Supreme Being contradicted his own laws in this instance. A sincere and consistent theist, then, must look on the thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, as an example of human laws that command what the laws of nature forbid.

That neither the Jew, nor the Christian, is under any obligation to look on it otherwise, may be collected from hence. The Sadducees rejected the whole oral law, and all the traditions of the Pharisees; they rejected too, most probably, the whole written law, except the five books ascribed to Moses, though this has been controverted; they denied the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the dead, and a state of future rewards and punishments, which they esteemed to be doctrines invented or adopted by the Pharisees, and which we may believe, on very good grounds, to have been introduced into the Jewish church at different times, as well as from different churches, wherein we know that they were taught, since there are no evident traces of these, but rather of the contrary opinions, in the Mosaical system of religion. The Sadducees, therefore, opposed on all these points, not only the Pharisees first, but the doctrine of Christ, to whom few of them were converted afterwards. The Sadducees, however, continued members of the Jewish church, and sacrificed at Jerusalem, whilst the Samaritans were driven out, or drove themselves out, and sacrificed on the mountain of Gerizaim: neither do we find, that the former were so obnoxious to the censure of Christ, as the Pharisees. But the Pharisees were still the orthodox, that is, the sect in fashion; and how much they multiplied the observances of the law by their traditions, and varied the sense of it by their interpretations of it, is enough known in general by every one. Now it seems very plain, that a Jew, whether Sadducee or Pharisee, might have softened by different methods, agreeably to the principles of his sect, the abominable violations of the natural, by the Mosaical law. This

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too, one may believe, would have been done, if the cruel spirit of their law had not made them a nation of enthusiasts; and if long habits had not made the spilling of blood more familiar to them than to most other people. The Sadducees were famous for their strict attachment to the rules of justice; and some are of opinion, that they took their name from an Hebrew word, signifying justice, rather than from Sadoc the disciple of Antigonus Sochæus. Surely then a Jew, in the character of a Sadducee, might reject out of the Pentateuch, with a due regard to natural justice, those unnatural, unjust, and bloody institutions, as reasonably, and as reconcilably with his Judaism, as he rejected the whole oral law in opposition to the Pharisees, and all the other books of the Scriptures, in conformity to the Samaritans. A Jew, in the character of a Pharisee, might have reconciled, with still greater ease, the law of Moses to the law of nature, that is, the assumed law of God to the real. A third law, the oral, might have brought this about, and this would have been the very best use to which it was ever put. When I say this might have been done with still greater ease, by interpretation than by retrenchment, I do not speak without sufficient grounds; since I may undertake to show, from Selden, Basnage, and other authors, who deal in the Talmud, and in Talmudical writings of rabbins, which they render intelligible even to me, that it would cost less improbability of tradition, and less subtilty of sophism in commenting, than many other opinions did, which these men had the credit to establish. The latitude of interpretation according to various senses, and the authority of a cabbala, were certain expedients by which the imputation might have been taken from the Supreme Being, or the severity and injustice have been softened and excused in Moses. Nothing of this kind having been done, I conclude once more, that this chapter of Deuteronomy stands, and must stand, an example of human laws, that command what the laws of nature forbid.

Little more consideration will be necessary to discover that a Christian, who professes a religion promulgated by God himself, and in every point conformable to the law of nature is obliged to deny any precept which is repugnant to this law to come from God, let it come on what authority, or be assumed on what pretence soever. The proceedings of Providence are represented on one occasion particularly, by St. Paul, to be merely arbitrary, and the presumption of those who should inquire into the reason of them, is very prudently reproved beforehand. How just the representation, or the reproof is, may be questioned, as the first of them has been, and as they both may be the more reasonably, because these proceedings relate to God's dealings with men; for the justice of which we are told by divines, that he appeals even

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to men. But this apostle himself does not, I think, prescribe any thing directly opposite to the law of nature, as the command of God to man; though his writings abound with mysterious refinements that savor strongly of the Pharisaical school, and with the mirabilia and inopinata of the Portic, a school not unknown to the former.

In all cases, and however this may be, the gospel of Christ is one continued lesson of the strictest morality, of justice, of benevolence, and of universal charity. He could have called for fire down from heaven, or for an army of destroying angels, to terrify those who did not believe, or to exterminate such as fell from the faith. But he breathed quite another spirit; and his instructions to his apostles went no further than to preach, to exhort, to reprove; and, where they could not prevail to have their doctrine received, to shake off the dust of their feet. In cases of the most enormous crimes, and even of apostacy, the apostles exercised no other power than that of separating such sinners from the communion of the faithful. If it should be urged that they could exercise no other, because they were not chief magistrates, nor legislators in any civil society as Moses was, and therefore that no argument ought to be drawn from what they did not do, to condemn what Moses did and commanded, it would be urged in vain. They healed the lame, they cured the blind, and even raised the dead to prove their mission. Moses proved his mission by miracles likewise. But the miracles wrought by them in the mild and beneficent spirit of Christianity, tended to the good of mankind; whereas the miracles he wrought, in the fierce and cruel spirit of Judaism, tended to the destruction of mankind. In this case, therefore, the difference was great; but in the other, in that of keeping the Jews attached to their religion, and the Christians to theirs, the difference was total. Moses exercised, and commanded the exercise of a political power, the most tyrannical, the most contrary to the laws of nature, and the most irreconcilable to every sentiment of humanity, for this purpose. The apostles, who might have exercised, for the same purpose, a divine, and a much greater power, exercised no other than that which has been mentioned, which was not cruel, most certainly, and can be scarce called coercive, in the course of their ministry, how much occasion soever heresy, apostacy, and other flagrant crimes in the churches they had planted, gave them for it. Elymas, indeed, was struck blind by St. Paul, and Ananias and Saphira fell dead at the feet of St. Peter. But these were particular and extraordinary interpositions of Providence. Christ gave no instruction for the exercise of such judgments in any case. He had reproved this kind of spirit in his disciples, when he was among them, and as long as

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his spirit remained in his church, the Mosaical spirit, as opposite to his law, as to the law of nature, could not arise. When they, who called themselves the successors of his apostles, hearkened to the suggestions of their passions, and called them zeal; that is, when political rather than religious motives guided them, they imitated Moses, outdo him they could not: and besides persecuting to convert, they not only promoted the utmost severity of punishment against those who fell back into idolatry or Judaism, or who embraced any heresy; but, like Moses, they pretended to do all this by the command of God: so that the church of Christ imitated, in this instance, as it did in many more when it was fallen into corruption, and not before, such institutions as the church and state of the Jews adopted in the primitive purity, such as that purity was, of their original establishment.

Upon the whole matter, a Christian, who takes his religion from the gospel, and not from systems of theology, far from being under any obligation of believing, is under the strongest of rejecting every law, whether perpetual or occasional, whether given to the Jews alone or to them and to others, that is evidently repugnant to the law of nature and of right reason, to the precepts of the gospel, to the example of Christ, to the practice of his first disciples, and to the genuine spirit of the religion they taught. If this was the spirit of God in the days of Christ, it was the spirit of God in the days of Moses: and whatever difference there might be in the several dispensations, and the objects of them God could have effected his purposes without contradicting his spirit. We may believe any thing sooner than this, that immutability admits of change; and yet we must admit both the contradiction and the change, if we give entire credit to all that we find related, and as it stands related, in the books of the Old Testament.

XXI.

I have quoted from father Simon, in one of my Letters* to my Lord Cornbury, a divine of the faculty of Paris, who held that the authenticity of these books, and divine inspiration of their authors, should be understood to extend no further than to matters purely of doctrine, or to such as have a necessary connection with these. Upon the same and even a stronger principle of reason, we may assert that as the sacred writers have no claim to inspiration, when they write on other subjects; so neither have they when they write any thing on these which is

* Let. iii.

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evidently inconsistent with right reason, in matters that are proper objects of reason, and with the first principles of natural law, which are at the same time the first principles of Christianity. What the French divine advanced, and what I have advanced here, will be treated as an impious paradox by some of those trifling solemn dogmatists in criticism and theology, who have advanced so many absurd and impious, really impious, paradoxes of their own. But let us see, in the present case, on whose side the paradox and the impiety lie. I say that the law of nature is the law of God. Of this I have the same demonstrative knowledge, that I have of the existence of God, the all-perfect Being. I say that the all-perfect Being cannot contradict himself; that he would contradict himself if the laws contained in the thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, to mention no others here, were his laws, since they contradict those of nature, and therefore that they are not his laws. Of all this I have as certain, as intuitive knowledge, as I have that two and two are equal to four, or that the whole is bigger than a part. From these indisputable premises I conclude, that all those expressions in the text, which ascribe these laws to God, are uninspired, perhaps interpolated, but undoubtedly false. What now does the Dogmatist do? He begs the question, and he pretends to demonstrate. His premises are precarious, and his conclusion is a paradox. He imputes, directly, to the author of nature, what he is forced to own unjust and cruel, according to the laws of nature; and he pretends to justify the all-perfect Being, whom he has thus accused, by inconclusive and sophistical arguments.

I have touched this point above; but since I recollect that Mr. Locke has insisted on a solution of the difficulty, which I think, and am not afraid to call, inconclusive and sophistical, it is worth my while to bestow a few more words upon it. There is a respect due even to the mistakes of that great man, the respect, I mean, of giving a reason for not submitting to his authority, which I would not pay to every dull commentator, nor frothy declaimer that should argue like him, or from him. We know, from some of his writings, how easily he received every hypothesis that favored, or that seemed to favor, the authenticity of the Jewish Scriptures, notwithstanding all he said in his chapter of probability; and Mr. Coste, the translator of his famous essay, who knew him well, accounted for this, and some other contradictions, by a strange timidity of temper, which made him often waver in his own abstract philosophical notions, when he came to apply them to any of his religious prejudices. He believed, on very insufficient authority, that the one true God was known to the Jews alone, and that the rest of mankind were polytheists and idolaters from the beginning. Thus he might receive too

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some other theological assumptions: this, for instance, as presumptuous and impertinent as it is, to assign the sufficient reason that infinite wisdom had for doing in one manner what infinite power might have done in several, "that it was necessary God should separate a chosen people from the rest of mankind, in order to preserve among mankind the knowledge of himself in his unity:" or this, that "the choice fell on the Israelites not for their own merit," since no nation upon earth could have less towards God or man, but, "for the merit of their forefathers," of Abraham famous in the east, the patriarch of the Arabians as well as of the Jews, of Isaac, his son, and of Jacob his grandson, of whom it is said in the Scriptures, that they were preferred in the womb to Ismael and to Esau, without assigning any apparent reason for this preference, since they could have no personal merit so early, and the reason of which must have been therefore this, that the Israelites were to descend from them; which looks as if the fathers were chosen for the sake of the sons, rather than the sons for the sake of the fathers. Mr. Locke, who could embrace such hypotheses as these, might easily assume, as he did assume, that "in order to keep up this separation, and to secure the effects of it, the Supreme Being submitted to be not only the tutelary deity of this people, as he had been of their fathers, and to make a covenant with them, but to be their local deity, and even literally as much their king as their God."

That he was such a king, Mr. Locke asserted, and on that assertion he distinguished between the Mosaical, and all other laws, in his letter concerning toleration. By the former, idolaters were to be rooted out, he says; but the former is not obligatory on Christians, and therefore urged by intolerants very absurdly in favor of persecution. The Jewish commonwealth, different from all others, was an absolute theocracy; no difference could be made between that commonwealth and the church; religious laws were the civil laws of that people, and part of their political government, in which God himself was the legislator. The citizens, therefore, of that commonwealth, who apostatised, were proceeded against as traitors and rebels, guilty of no less than high treason. Let it be so. The objections of injustice and cruelty to these laws will remain in their full force, and be of more weight to prove them human, than all these hypotheses to prove them divine. God was king, and idolatry was no less than high treason; no objection therefore can lie against the punishment of it. None certainly, but every objection to the manner and degree in which this punishment was to be inflicted, stands good; for if we can believe God to have been a king, we can never believe him to have been such a king as

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he is described, nor to have given such laws as Moses gave in his name. Is it not enough to reduce, in our notions, the Supreme Being to the state of an earthly monarch, unless we degrade the all-perfect Being, in them, to the character of an unjust and cruel tyrant, who authorised, and even commanded his ministers expressly to punish without measure, without discernment, and without forms of justice? Can it be obligatory on a Christian to believe this which Mr. Locke believed? Surely not; no more than to believe that it is obligatory on him at this day, to punish heretics by virtue of these laws, which opinion Mr. Locke disclaimed, and against which he wrote this very treatise.

I need not take notice of the indulgence which Mr. Locke observes, to the honor of the Mosaical law, was shown by it to strangers. The observation is not strictly within my subject; for I never affirmed, that all the laws of Moses were repugnant to the law of nature. But what was this indulgence? Strangers were not compelled by force, and on pain of death, to embrace Judaism, nor were the Israelites commanded to exterminate the Moabites, and other foreign nations, unless they renounced their idolatry. The task might have been too hard for the chosen people, and they did not want, at that time, any more land than that of the seven nations. If they had wanted more, they would have soon had a law to take it, and to exterminate the rightful possessors, as they had a promise, and a law which authorised them to conquer and destroy the Canaanites. Mr. Locke, indeed, adds another reason for this destruction. God had chosen Canaan for his kingdom, as well as the Israelites for his subjects, and he could not suffer the adoration of any other deity in his kingdom, though, in fact, other deities continued to be adored there, with or without the consent of his people. More reflections on the manner of stating facts, as well as of arguing, may be made; but these are more than enough, to show in one instance more, and by the way, into how low a form the greatest writers fall, when they attempt to reconcile to common sense, or common honesty, many passages of traditions inconsistent with both. The Jews, or the penmen of these traditions, had so little of either, that they represent sometimes a patriarch like Jacob, and sometimes a saint like David, by characters that can belong to none but the very worst of men. Can we be surprised, then, that they ascribed to the all-perfect Being, on various occasions, such a conduct, and such laws as are inconsistent with his most obvious perfections? Can we believe such a conduct, and such laws, to have been his, on the word of the proudest and most lying nation of the world?

Many other considerations some of which have been occasion-

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ally mentioned, in what I have written to you, might have their place here. But I shall confine myself to one which I do not remember to have seen, nor heard urged on one side, nor anticipated on the other. To show then the more evidently, how absurd as well as impious, it is to ascribe these Mosaical laws to God, let it be considered, that neither the people of Israel, nor their legislator perhaps, knew anything of another life, wherein the crimes committed in this life are to be punished; although he might have learned this doctrine, which was not so much a secret doctrine as it may be presumed that the unity of the Supreme God was, among the Egyptians. Whether he had learned both, or either, or neither of them in those schools, cannot be determined; but this may be advanced with assurance. If Moses knew that crimes and therefore idolatry, one of the greatest, were to be punished in another life, he deceived the people in the covenant they made by his intervention with God. If he did not know it, I say with horror the consequence, according to the hypothesis I oppose, must be, that God deceived both him and them. In either case, a covenant or bargain was made, wherein the conditions of obedience and disobedience were not fully, nor by consequence fairly stated. The Israelites had better things to hope, and worse to fear, than those that were expressed in it; and their whole history seems to show how much need they had of these additional motives, to restrain them from polytheism and idolatry, and to answer the assumed purposes of Divine Providence.

XXII.

The rough draughts, that have been thrown upon these papers, may help to show that there is such a thing as the law of nature, antecedent to all other laws, and to the establishment of civil society; that this law is the law of reason collected *à posteriori* from the actual constitution of things, by experience and observation; that as instinct affections, passions, and self-love that universal spring of the animal kind, were given to put us into action, so this law is given to guide and govern the human conduct; that if this law did universally and constantly guide and govern it, mankind would reach the perfection of their nature, and be as happy as they are by this made capable of being; but that the culture of their reason, the improvement of their knowledge and every thing that tends to the perfection of their nature, and the completion of their happiness, being left to their industry, and subjected to the accidents and vicissitudes of human affairs, some few remain in ignorance, many more

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fall into error, and the irrational prevails over the rational nature, in different degrees, in all of them; that the state of mankind is imperfect, in proportion as the use that they make of their reason is so; that the will of God signified by the law of nature, and revealed in his works, a revelation that admits of no doubt, shows the road to human happiness to all mankind; that they are seduced out of it by false appearances, and that law, custom, and even religion, which should have kept them in it, confirm these appearances, and only serve to keep them out of it.

If it be difficult to show the particular reasons that have contributed, in an immense variety of instances, to render the laws and customs of mankind so opposite to one another as they are, and so opposite, or so little conformable, to the law of nature and of right reason, which should have been the model, and must be made the criterion of them all, it is easy enough to discover what has rendered the religions, that have arisen in the world from the first ages of it, so opposite in many particular modes, so similar in many general principles, and all of them together so little conformable to natural religion.

These religions instituted by human, under the mask of divine authority, though they might be intended to restrain and reform mankind, to give stronger sanctions to the law of nature, and to be subservient to government, have served, in all ages to very different purposes. They have promoted false conceptions of the Deity, they have substituted superstition in the place of those real duties which we owe to God and man, they have added new occasions to those that subsisted before of enmity and strife; and insociability has increased as they have flourished. Nay, the first principles of them have been laid in it in direct opposition to the religion of nature and reason, the first principle of which is a sociability that flows from universal benevolence. We are obliged to except, out of the religions instituted by human authority, the Jewish and the Christian; but we cannot except even these as one of them was taught originally, as the other of them has been taught in the course of it, and as both of them have been practised, out of the religions that have served to the ill purposes here mentioned, to that principally of insociability. On the contrary, no religions have rendered the professors of them so insociable to other men, as those which have claimed truly or falsely to be immediate revelations of the Supreme Being, and have exacted an implicit faith as well as an implicit obedience. Insociability was from the first, and continues still, the great characteristic of Judaism. So it was, and so it is of Mahometanism. So it was not of gospel Christianity, but so it is become of theological Christianity; if I may be

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allowed to make a distinction which will justify itself abundantly in every instance of comparison.

The wisdom, as well as the power that appears in the whole construction, order and harmony of the universe, must have carried at all times the same general conviction into the breast of every man who observed, and reflected on his own observations. Balbus had therefore sufficient reason to say, in a good sense, what Tully makes him say, that "he must want intelligence himself who can believe that this stupendous machine was made and is preserved without intelligence," that is, without distinct and superior intelligence, not without intelligence of its own; the intelligence of the maker, not that of the thing made, for this is such an absurdity as the refinements of philosophy alone could adopt, and as can be never reconciled to the judgment of common sense. "Celestem ergo admirabilem ordinem .... qui vacare mente putat, is ipse mentis expers habendus est," may be understood indeed to signify this very absurdity in the mouth of a Stoic, and Tully might mean to make Balbus speak in character, for which reason the passage should never be quoted without any explanation as it is continually, for an exposition of true theism. But if the sphere of Posidonius had been sent to the Britons, or to the Scythians, in the days of Balbus and Tully; if the machine called, I know not why, the Orrery, was sent, in our days, to the Hottentots, or the Samojedes, these savages would smile at the stupidity of any of their brethren, if any so stupid should be found among savages, who could imagine such a machine to be the effect of chance, or to have contrived and made itself. They would all conclude, that it was the work of intelligence, and of greater skill than that which they employed to build their huts, or to shape their canoes. The most reasonable among them could not fail to see, in the unity of the design, the unity of the artificer. But the vulgar, who make themselves their own ideas, and their own manners, the measure of all things, might very easily conclude, that the several parts of this machine were made, and the several motions of it were directed, by different intelligences. This opinion too might grow up to be general amongst them, and the most rational savages might be obliged to yield to the least rational, in advancing of which no more is assumed than what has happened in every age and country, even the most civilised, and the least ignorant. But none of these savages would be absurd enough to suppose, though philosophers such as the Stoicians have done little less, that the intelligence which made every wheel of the machine to move was in the wheel.

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The Romans, the Greeks, and before them all the learned nations of the east, were in this case. The vulgar acknowledged a multitude of divinities, to whom they ascribed every excellency, and every defect of their own nature, so that in worshipping them they worshipped in some sort themselves. Their wise men, who acknowledged the unity of a Supreme Being, and held these inferior divinities to be his creatures and ministers, made even this being after their own image. The lovers of ease made him an indolent being, and wholly unconcerned about human affairs. The proud, who thought every thing that related to man equally important, and equally an object worthy of the divine care, made him a busy trifling being. "Myrmecides aliquis, minutorum opusculorum fabricator." They who converted, with profane timidity, a reverential awe into a superstitious fear of God, and made the existence of a Supreme Being, which ought to be the comfort, the terror of mankind, ran into one of these extremes. They either screened him from human sight by the interposition of mediating, interceding, atoning beings: or, fierce and cruel themselves, they represented him hating without reason, revenging without provocation, and punishing without measure. The gay, the wanton, the luxurious, made gods and goddesses of the same characters; and Jupiter himself, the father of gods and men, was liable to human passions, and partook of sensual pleasures. Thus the vulgar believed, and thus the priests encouraged; whilst the philosophers, overborne by the torrent of polytheism, suffered them to believe, in ages when true theism was reputed atheism. There were others again who had, besides that vanity which is common to all men, the particular vanity of believing themselves chosen objects of the care of heaven, distinguished by singular privileges, and predestinated to some glorious purpose or other. The Egyptians were the first of all men admitted to the sight of the gods, and to a communication with them, according to Jamblicus, and we may see what notions had been instilled into the Romans, of grandeur, and empire, to which they were designed by the gods, when we read the pompous answer that Jupiter makes to his daughter, in the First Book of the Æneid. I wave any further instances of the same kind: that of the Israelites, the most extraordinary of any, is too well known to be mentioned.

It is unnecessary too that I should enumerate, in this place, any of those metaphysical whimsies, concerning the divine and human nature, which philosophers broached, and brought into fashion; as the vulgar had brought, though they had not been alone to invent, all the false conceptions that prevailed about the deity. Much has been said already, and more will be said

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on that subject. What is to my purpose to observe here is, that the systems of theology, which philosophers, priests, and the rabble of the world conspired to frame, were systems of superstition, that they passed however for systems of religion revealed some how or other, to somebody or other, sometimes by the Supreme Being himself, sometimes by any other divine person, and, therefore, always of more authority than such as human reason could collect from the appearances of things. This persuasion too made it quite unnecessary to employ human reason about so superfluous a work, and thus an immense crop of superstitions grew up, choked the seeds of natural religion, and corrupted, in a great degree, both public and private morality. In short, reason has been always controlled, natural religion and natural law have been almost entirely superseded in every society of men, and many instances might be produced to show that this has happened most in those which have been esteemed the most civilised. This has been the effect of imagination and passion, necessary, but dangerous, parts of our composition, under the influence of particular prejudices, and the direction of private motives in matters of the most public concern. If the revelations had not been pretended only, if the same divine wisdom, that shows both the existence and the will of God in his works, had prescribed any particular form of worship to mankind, and had inspired the particular applications of his general laws, the system of religious and civil government would have been uniform in the whole world, as well as conformable to nature, and reason, and the state of mankind would have arrived at human perfection. But it was not in the councils of the Most High, which it becomes us to adore and not to examine, that this should be so, and therefore all these systems of religions and laws being nothing more than human expedients, there is no room to wonder that they have not been more effectual to good purposes, nor that the state of mankind is such as we feel, and as we are apt to complain that it is.

XXIII.

We may assure, from fact, that this has been the divine economy, and leave those men to assume from imagination what this economy has, or should have been, who have so much theological presumption. But whilst we leave them to imagine without fact, we must not suffer them to imagine against it. Nothing can be, I think, more true than what has been advanced concerning the unnatural religions, laws, and customs established in the several societies of men, and yet it is not less true, that

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the tables of natural religion and law are hung up in the sight of all men. All may read them, and though error has prevailed, and will ever prevail in the bulk of mankind against knowledge, more or less, and to some degree, because it is agreeable to the private interests of those who lead, and to the prejudices of those who are led, that it should, I do not believe that there ever was a time, when it could be said with truth that the law of nature was imperfectly known, or that it was an incomplete system of morality before the Christian revelation, both of which propositions are roundly advanced by divines, though manifestly false.

Dr. Clarke says, in his Evidences of natural and revealed rellgion, which are often dim, and often weak, that the heathen philosophers were never able to prove and explain clearly and distinctly enough to persons of all capacities those things which they were the most fully certain of, and did in good measure understand, such as the obligations of virtue, and the will of God, in matters of morality. Now if it could be reconciled to common sense that they understood not fully, but in good measure only, such doctrines as they are said in the same sentence to have been fully certain of, there would be no occasion to wonder that they were unable to prove and explain them. But to pass this over, the reasons alleged to show their inability in this respect, or that they understood these things in good measure only, are such as give, indeed, great occasion to wonder when they fall from the pen of so able a writer. Their discourses, he says, were rather speculative and learned, nice and subtile disputes, than practical and useful instructions; the bulk of mankind could not profit by the sublime doctrine of Plato, for instance. Agreed. The difficulty then of discovering and explaining the will of God, in matters of morality, and the whole system of natural religion, arose merely from the method they took of discovering it to themselves, and of explaining it to others. That is, they did by this system the very thing which divines have done by that of Christianity. Philosophers departed from the simplicity of nature, divines from that of the gospel. Had the former been content to collect the will of God, as far as it concerns the duty of man, from what they knew of themselves, of their fellow-creatures, and of the constitution, physical and moral, of the world, they had neither bewildered themselves nor grown unintelligible to others. But they could not be so content. Many of these ancient, like their mimics, the modern reasoners, *à priori*, undertook to deduce the religion of human nature and of human reason, from principles that exist infinitely beyond them. They knew human nature, and from thence they might, by the help of human reason, have taught very clearly what they understood very fully.

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They did both when they kept within these bounds, but when they went beyond them, they did neither. When they pretended to contemplate the nature and moral attributes of the Supreme Being, they were, indeed, as unqualified for it as bats are to behold the light of the sun. They puzzled the clearest, and confounded the most distinct ideas, sometimes by metaphysical enthusiasm, and sometimes by political design; for when such mists are conjured up in the most serene parts of our intellectual system, it cannot be intended by men who are in their senses, one would think, to make us see better, and, therefore, I could never read the proposition, that we may easily know God, if we be not ignorant of ourselves, so absolutely advanced, nor that strange parallel between God and the soul of man, wherein Dr. Barrow confesses that he indulged his thoughts somewhat freely,* without being sorry to find them in the works of so respectable an author.

Another reason, brought by Clarke, to show how unable these philosophers were to prove and explain the obligations of natural religion is this. They were never able to frame to themselves any complete, and regular, and consistent system or scheme of things. If by these words be meant, as it must be in this place, such a system or scheme of morality, the fact asserted is untrue, how excellently soever the eloquent Lactantius may have set this matter forth, or the judicious Justin may have supported our modern doctor. In contradiction to all three, we may affirm boldly, because truly, that there is no one moral virtue which has not been taught, explained and proved, by the heathen philosophers, both occasionally and purposely. It is, therefore, particularly absurd, in Christian writers, to say as the author of the evidences says, after his two guides, that these philosophers did, indeed, discover all the particular doctrines of true religion, but that no one of them made a scheme true in all its parts, nor did any one collect the several truths scattered up and down in their writings. For, I ask, are all the truths of natural and revealed religion collected into one regular and complete system in any of the gospels, or even of the epistles? Did any one of the fathers of the church make an entire scheme of religion or morality true in all its parts? will any man have the front to deny that they all mingled some truth and some error? did not this very Lactantius, did not Justin do so? did any one of the fathers collect the truths that concern all our moral obligations, separate them from the errors, and made a regular complete system of the whole? will it be said that St. Ambrose did? but St. Ambrose was a poor imitator of Tully. In short, all the hea-

* Vol. ii. Serm. vii.

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then philosophers agreed, that the practice of virtue was of necessary and indispensable obligation, and that the happiness of mankind depended on it in general and in particular. They all agreed likewise what was virtue, and what was vice; and if they had any disputes about the great principles of natural, Christians had the same about the great principles of revealed, religion. They had such in the days of Justin and of Lactantius, and that they continued to have them in our days, Clarke himself has been a signal example.

It was neither natural theology, nor ethics, that perplexed natural religion. It was metaphysical theology. Ancient, like modern, heathen, like Christian philosophers, had indeed many trifling disputes about words, the Stoics particularly, or about things so very plain that nothing less than Grecian acuteness could make them appear at all intricate. Such were those about the "summum bonum,"* in which it is said, there were two hundred and fourscore different opinions. That there were so many may be doubted, but that they must have been extremely various is certain. The "summum bonum," or the supreme good of man, as it was understood and taught by the heathen philosophers, and which Dr. Clarke calls, not without a designed ambiguity, the final happiness of man, was a subject whereon every man had a right to pronounce for himself, and no man had a right to pronounce for another. These disputes were, therefore, very trifling. But they should not be so strongly objected, since it is easy to show that Christian divines, the schoolmen especially, have trifled as much on points relative to natural and revealed religion both, as ever the heathen did on points relative to the former. Of the Christian trifles too, we may say, what could not be said of the others, that they became serious: "hæ nugæ ad seria ducunt." They have divided the schools, and the schools have divided the world, with circumstances of rage and cruelty to be found among no other parties.

XXIV.

If such disputes, as that which has been mentioned, were easy, or might be thought unnecessary to be determined, disputes of another kind arose when the heathen philosophers attempted, for they did attempt, to make a complete, regular, and consistent system or scheme of things, the want of which is objected to them. These attempts were pushed very far by pagan theists, but it must be confessed, that they served only to show that men

* Varro, St. Austin.

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are fitted to know a little of some few things, and the whole of nothing. These men found soon, that no sufficient materials for such a system or scheme lay within the bounds of natural law, and natural theology. They had recourse, therefore, to metaphysical theology, which being a science of their own invention, it was easy for them to establish such principles in it, as they judged sufficient for their purpose. They proceeded, therefore, to reverse the whole order of reasoning in the search of truth, to reverse the pyramid; and instead of rising up from a broad foundation of particulars, laid in knowledge, to the lofty and narrow pinnacle of all knowledge, the existence of one all-perfect Being, they affected preposterously to set this pinnacle on the ground, and to raise the pyramid without any foundations at all. They not only reasoned concerning the nature and attributes of God himself, from mere imagination, but they gave him as many companions, and ministers, gods, angels, demons, genii, as they thought fit. Clarke says, and most of his brethren agree with him, that to reason in this manner from the nature and attributes of God, is the very first and most necessary thing of all. His and their approbation of the reasoning of pagan theists, in consequence of this first and most necessary thing of all, would not be quite so full; and indeed it may seem to have been introduced for ornament, rather than for use, by those who made the one Supreme Being, according to the nature and attributes they give him, so immediately active in human affairs. But the pagan theists declined no help; and the service their gods, and other inferior beings were of, in accounting for the creation and government of the world, is known to every man who has been conversant in their writings, in those of Plato particularly. When they wanted to account for the origin of evil, ditheism was invented; when they wanted to account for the supposed unjust distribution of good and evil, the "mythologia de inferis."

But to be more particular. Clarke observes, that bare reason cannot discover in what manner, and with what kind of external service God will be worshipped. He might have added, that bare reason cannot discover how any external service, that man can pay, should be acceptable to the Supreme and all-perfect Being, except a compliance in all our words and actions, with his known will, revealed in his works, an inward adoration of his unknown nature, a gratitude for benefits, and an entire resignation to his providence. The heathens knew that all the duties of natural religion are contained under these heads, but that the divine will concerning any external service, with which God would be worshipped, had been signified relatively to none of these duties. They might, therefore, as the best and wisest of of them did, approve the political institutions of an external ser-

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vice, as political institutions, and as far as they helped to keep up a lively sense of these duties in the minds of men, and to promote the practice of them. But they, who presumed to reason boldly, about the nature and attributes of God, were not so content. They represented the one Supreme Being, to themselves and others, under as many different characters as they represented their different gods. The most general representation of him, because it was thought the most proper to intimidate mankind, and to answer the ends of government, or because it was that which natural and superstitious fear could the most easily frame, was framed under the image of an absolute tyrannical monarch. From such notions, these reasoners *à priori* deduced all those, whereby they took men out of the relations of creatures to their creator, and placed them in that of slaves to their tyrant. From hence those numberless, ridiculous, and cruel rites of paganism, which were held as necessary to obtain the favor, and to avert the anger of heaven, as the strictest observation of morality; nay more necessary, if we may judge, as we may most reasonably, of ancient by modern, and of pagan by Christian theology.

Obedience to the laws of nature is our first duty, and our greatest interest: the happiness of our whole kind, wherein every individual is included, depends on it. Obedience carries its reward, disobedience its punishment along with it in the general system, and God has not made particular systems, nor established particular providences for particular nations, much less for particular men, as far as we can discover by the help of reason and experience. The same causes produce the same effects every where, with some little variety of circumstances, and as the precepts of the law are common to all men, so are the sanctions of it. In short, as all men sin against the order of nature more or less, so the imperfect state of mankind shows that they suffer more or less by the uniform course of it. But neither reason nor experience will show us, in the author of nature, an angry revengeful judge, or a bloody executioner. Neither reason nor experience will lead us to inquire what propitiation God will accept, nor in what manner a reconciliation between the Supreme Being and this worm man is to be made.* Natural reason does not stop here, nor expect with impatience the aid of some particular revelation. She stops much sooner. Repentance, as it implies amendment, is one of her doctrines, a necessary consequence of her principles, and she does not so much as suspect that any further revelation is wanting to establish it. But the reasoners *à priori* did on false principles, in this case, and in

* Clarke in his Evid.

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many others, what an unreasoning vulgar had done through ignorance, and without any principles at all, except those of superstition. They took off from the real perfections of the Supreme Being, and they added imaginary excellences to the human nature: like Procrustes, they stretched out humanity, and lopped off from divinity; with great metaphysical pains, as much as they could; and when they found that one of these lines was still too short, and the other still too long, to answer their purpose, of making them nearly commensurate, they spun a thread out of imagination, to lengthen the shortest.

On such notions of the divine and human nature, Egyptian, Chaldæan, Magian, and almost all the theists of antiquity, founded their theology, on the authority of which they instituted various forms of worship, and promoted superstitious opinions, by their attempts to discover the whole scheme and system of things, some of which infected even the fathers of our church in ancient times, and would be avowed at this time by none but Rosicrucians, and fanatics as mad as them. In fine, this was the source from which so many religious ceremonies and observances, that had no direction to promote natural religion, though pretending to derive their institution from the author of it, arose. Sins were multiplied, and the terrors of superstitious minds increased. But even if these terrors had been rightly and solely applied to real crimes, not of sins of arbitrary discipline, they would have been of little effect, since the means of reconciling all sinners to an offended deity were made by this theology extremely easy. Strange means indeed they were, and such as cost the offender little. Such were expiatory sacrifices, wherein the blood of an innocent beast, or man, was shed to atone for the guilty person, as if God was appeased whenever the priest were glutted with roast meat, or as if it were indifferent to him whose blood was shed, provided his altars reeked with gore. This expiation was pushed to such a degree of pious inhumanity, that fathers made burnt offerings of their children to Moloch. I call it pious, because they who never offered up themselves seemed however to prove their repentance, as Abraham was ready to prove his faith much better, by sacrificing their children, than a ram or an ox. They sacrificed what they held dearest next to themselves; and they might think that they had the example of the gods, to authorise the practice, for Sanchoniathon, it is said, related, that Saturn had offered up his only son in the time of a plague. "Cœlo patri in holocaustum obtulit."

This was one effect of theological engraftments on natural religion. The Supreme Being was represented so vindictive and cruel, that nothing less than acts of the utmost cruelty could appease his anger, and that his priests were so many

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butchers of men and other animals. Another engraftment of the same kind was deduced from a very contrary notion, from a notion that God was constantly attentive to the affairs of men, to the least, and to the most important alike; that he entered into the closest familiarity with some, and gave audience at all times to all. Astonishing instances of this sort, as well as of the former, might be cited; for the same theology, which represented the all-perfect Being rigorous and severe, without any regard to his mercy, or even to his justice, represented him with most theological inconsistency, on other occasions gracious, conversable, affable, without any regard to his majesty, or to the infinite superiority of his nature. But these instances are so easily found, and they are so shocking to every sincere theist who frames the most elevated, and therefore the least unworthy sentiments he is able of God, that I am willing to save myself and you the trouble of reflecting on them. "Ita tætra sunt, ut ea fugiat et reformidet oratio."* How should they be otherwise, when ignorance and superstition were first to produce them, and when the eternal unalterable reason of things, the knowledge of which is claimed by men, who approve some of the most detestable of these instances, and who produce others of their own growth, but upon the same principles, is for the most part nothing else than the reason of party, of prejudice, of profession, and of authority? Let me therefore mention one alone. It shall be one that is common to all religions, and that carries with it, in general practice, more matter of ridicule than of horror. The instance I mean is prayer; or, to speak more properly, the abuse of prayer. To keep up a due sense of our dependence on God, for which purpose this institution may be a very useful, and consequently, a very rational expedient, is the duty of every man. But then it must be practised in a manner reconcilable to other duties of religion; in the first place to an awful reverence which consists in the inward sentiment wholly, and so little in outward demonstrations, that when these are carried too far they become a ludicrous pageantry of devotion, and serve rather to destroy it in most minds than to maintain it in any; to an absolute resignation in the next place, one act of which is preferable to ten thousand collects. Men are fond of access to the Supreme Being. Nothing can flatter humanity so much. As soon, therefore, as they are taught that they may have it, not only by their proxies, the priests, but by themselves immediately, they use it familiarly and impertinently. They put up contradictory petitions to heaven in all the churches of

* Cic. Tusc. Disp.

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the world. Some would be hurtful to themselves if they were granted, and almost all would be so to others. If the true God could be importuned as Lucian represents Jupiter, he would be importuned to change at every moment the dispositions of his infinite wisdom, and to accommodate the whole economy of his providence in a manner that implies often contradiction, to different and opposite interests, nay to the different and opposite caprices, not of nations alone, but of particular men, women and children.

Since I have mentioned this part of divine worship, among other external services, it may be proper to take notice of the second Alcibiades which Mr. Clarke quotes, and which will serve, if I mistake not, my purpose better than his. In that dialogue, Socrates insists on the danger of addressing particular petitions to the gods, lest we should ask what is evil in itself, or what may prove so in the event. He recites the prayer of some ancient poet, which is little else than a short act of resignation. He commends the Lacedæmonians for addressing themselves in much the same style to the gods, when they asked in general "pulchra cum bonis." He mentions the preference given by the oracle of Jupiter Hammon to the prayers of the Lacedæmonians over those of the Athenians, and the rest of the Greeks. The authority of Homer is brought, as Plato, Plutarch, and generally the ancient writers are apt to allege it on all occasions very impertinently, to prove that the gods are prone to be angry, and to bear hatred even to whole nations. But Socrates concludes very rationally, that if they are so they are not to be bribed by sacrifices, by offerings, and by external services, and that they regard the purity of the heart alone. Socrates thought that human errors about the will of God, and the duty of man, proceeded from pride more than ignorance, and therefore advised Alcibiades, of the purity of whose heart he had no very good opinion, "since he would not make use of the general resigned prayer of the Lacedæmonians, because of his pride, to wait till he had learned how to behave himself towards the gods and towards men." He adds, "that one who had a concern for him, and a wonderful care of him, would be his instructor, and would dispel the darkness of his mind, as Minerva in Homer takes the cloud from before the eyes of Diomede, that he might be able to discern what was good from what was evil."

Whether it be as difficult, as Clarke imagined, to suppose that Socrates meant himself, in this passage, I examine not. Let it be that he meant the demon of Alcibiades. Since the master had an attending demon who dissuaded and restrained him when that was necessary; the scholar might have one who would inform, and determine him whenever that should be necessary.

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Nay more. Let it be as some learned men* have observed, that Plato began to write immediately after the three last prophets of the Jews, as if God had raised up him to supply their place. Let them cite in favor of this opinion, another passage wherein this philosopher says, "that if a perfectly just man should appear in the world, he would be imprisoned, buffeted, whipped, and crucified, which must needs have been a prophecy of Christ, because Christ was whipped and crucified; whereas Socrates only drank the poison by which he was condemned to die." Let the same learned men take this passage too, in the second Alcibiades, if they please, for another prophecy of the coming of Christ, and of a divine revelation, since remote events, and a distant time, are often signified by immediate events, and the present time, in prophetical language.

Such prophecies in Plato will not be readily, nor generally admitted, I think; neither does Clarke insist that they should. But it must be admitted, that Plato insinuates in many places the want, or the necessity, of a divine revelation to discover the external service God requires, and the expiation for sin, to give stronger assurances of the rewards and punishments that await men in another world, concerning which, however, he had received particular information, by one who returned from thence on purpose, and to frame a system of the whole order of things, both in this world and the next, that is, of the whole economy of God's dispensations to man, and of his government in heaven and on earth.

XXV.

It was on some of these subjects Socrates had discoursed, when Simmias spoke to him in the manner quoted by Clarke. He had owned that he did not expect to attain a full knowledge of these things, till the soul was separated from the body, and entirely purified in that other world, of which he gave so topographical a description. The conclusion was, "that since they could not acquire a certain knowledge of the truth here, they should fix on the best and safest of human reasons, and venture on that bottom through the storms of life, unless they could get one still more firm, such as some divine revelation would be, to render their passage less dangerous." This now is the second of the proofs brought to show, "that the best, wisest, and least superstitious of the philosophers confessed their sense of the want of a divine revelation, and hoped for something of that nature." The proofs are pompously introduced, but the whole force of

* Dacier.

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them amounts to no more than this, that Socrates, if in truth Socrates did say all that his scholar makes him say, was much in the wrong for not adding curiosity to pride, among the causes of human error, concerning the will of God, and the duty of man; but Socrates himself had a great mind to know more than God has made his human creatures capable of knowing, and, therefore, more than he judged it necessary or useful for them to know. The imaginary want had, therefore, no other principle than metaphysical curiosity. It could have no other. Nothing could be wanting to the divine purpose where God had given, though he had limited the means. How absurd, how trifling is it then to bring the opinion of philosophers concerning this want, and their hopes that it would be supplied, as a proof that the want was real, and that, after it had been long complained of, it was supplied? I pass over another pretended proof of the same kind. Porphyry, whom it is impossible to see ranked among the least superstitious philosophers without surprise, found, it seems, that the universal method of delivering souls was not sufficiently known by philosophers.

In general, these men complained that sense reached but a little way in acquiring knowledge, that the human mind was weak, that the human life was short, and that the truth of things lay deep in darkness.* These complaints related to all parts of science, physical and metaphysical, to natural philosophy as well as natural theology, and I might, therefore, make the same use of them in one case, that Clarke makes in the other. I might bring the imperfect knowledge of corporeal nature, and the sense philosophers had of this imperfection, in proof that some necessary knowledge of this kind was wanting, and that they had reason to hope the defect would be supplied sooner or later, some how or other, in a natural or in a supernatural way. I might beg the question, like the doctor, and having assumed that they were ignorant of many things necessary to the physical, as he assumes with much less reason, that they were of many things necessary to the moral advantages of life; I might argue, that they had reason to expect a time would come, when men would be rendered able to discover not only the second, but the first qualities of substances, to reason from a general knowledge of essences, not from a particular knowledge of effects, and to frame by these and other extraordinary means a complete, regular, and consistent scheme or system of the whole economy of corporeal nature.

In this manner I might represent the wants, the complaints and the expectations of the heathen philosophers. Thus I might

* Angustos sensus, imbecillos animos, brevia curricula vitæ, in profundo veritatem esse demersam, omnia tenebris circumfusa esse. . . . .

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argue, and my representation and my argument would be extremely ridiculous. But are those of Clarke less so? I think not. These philosophers, such of them, at least, whose works are come down to us, were very ignorant in physics. But in natural theology, and in morality, their knowledge was not deficient, though it was confined, in the former, to a very few general propositions. They had the same natural means of knowing that we have, and they knew, as well as we know, that "there is a first intelligent cause of all things, that the infinite wisdom and power of this being made, and preserves the universe, and that his providence governs it." They knew then, very fully, the relation in which they stood to this Being, the relation of dependent creatures and subjects; and this knowledge was sufficient, or none would be so, to enforce the laws he had given them; for the same means that discovered the divine existence, discovered the divine will in the whole extent of our moral obligations. We might have expected, that Clarke would have specified some of these moral obligations which were unknown, or imperfectly known, to the philosophers, after all his insinuations concerning their ignorance. But instead of doing this, he insists, in the very place where his subject required it, on such observances, such doctrines, and such speculations alone as have been since indeed imposed by the Christian revelation, but as cannot be reckoned necessary parts, nor, in truth, any parts of the religion of nature and of reason. Lactantius, whom he quotes so often, and whose suffrage is in this case of more weight, because his zeal for Christianity was such, that he defended and taught it before he understood it, gives up the point. The philosophers, according to him, discovered the whole truth, and the whole secret of divine religion.* No doubt they did so, and the natural divine religion which they discovered, is the foundation of the Christian. There is no one moral precept in the whole gospel, as I have hinted already, which was not taught by heathen philosophers. Even those refinements upon virtue, to which our divines are willing to suppose, that mere humanity could not reach, were taught by some heathen sages, and practised by some heathen saints, as well before as after the coming of Christ. Before this time, their religion, that I mean of some of the philosophers, was much more spiritual than that of the Jews. After this time, it vied for spirituality, for mystery, and for supernatural effects with the Christian. To be humble, to renounce the pomps and vanities of the world, to mortify the flesh, to be patient under afflictions, to forgive injuries, to return good for

* Totam igitur veritatem, et omne divinæ religionis arcanum philosophi attigerunt. L. 7.

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evil, were particular doctrines of paganism, as universal charity or benevolence was the broad foundation of their moral system. This matter is strongly and largely exemplified in the third book of the "alnetanæ quæstiones;" for it served bishop Huet's argument in that place to show, what it served Dr. Clarke's argument in his evidences to conceal.

How trifling is it, after this, to insist on the disputes of a theological kind; for of a moral kind there were, properly speaking, none that arose among the philosophers? They were disputes about words, or about some very insignificant speculations, and no more; for the morality of Zeno, and of Epicurus, reduced to practice was the same. But to proceed; how strongly might this objection be retorted on the fathers of the Christian church? To object that the heathen had no one complete scheme wherein all the moral duties were collected together, instead of being taught occasionally, is ridiculous, since the same objection might be made, if it was one, to Christianity likewise. But the divines who object this, mean something more. When they say that the philosophers were unable to comprehend the truth of religion, though they discovered and explained almost all the particulars wherein it consists,* they mean by the entire scheme they refer to, the summary of their own theology, wherein the fall and the redemption of man, and all the mysteries of Christianity are contained. This they call the whole doctrine, and design of true religion from the original to the consummation of all things, and of this indeed the heathen philosophers might well be ignorant, since no man could know it who was not taught by St. Paul, or by some Christian doctor.†

Thus their ignorance of true religion is accounted for not a little hypothetically. Bnt even thus their complaints are not justified, nor the expectations imputed to them rendered reasonable. They must needs be ignorant of true religion, if natural religion was a part of it only, even at that time, as it is at this. They could not know a revealed religion, nor any real want of it before the revelation was made, and the knowledge they had was such as the Author of nature had thought sufficient, since he had given them no more. Their complaints and their expectations, therefore, were founded in proud curiosity, and vain presumption. The use which Clarke makes of them is something worse. To approve them, and to deduce from the supposed reasonableness of them the necessity of a further revelation, is to weigh his own opinion, and theirs, against Providence.

* —Quamvis ea fere, quibus summa ipsa constat, et viderint, et explicaverint.—Lact. L. 7.

† Verum autem non nisi ejus scire est, qui sit doctus a Deo.—Ibid.

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It is to say, that they saw before, and that he has seen since this further revelation was made, the necessity of it to reform mankind effectually, by opening to them the whole doctrine and design of true religion, which were opened in part only to the heathen world; and that the event has justified the complaints, and the expectation. This latter has been a topic of much theological triumph. Bring me a man, says Lactantius,* who is choleric, who is given to rail, who is unruly and fierce, with a few words of God I will render him as tame as a sheep. Bring me one who is given up to his lust, and so he goes on. "Numquis hæc philosophorum aut unquam præstitit, aut præstare si velit, potest?" Did any one of the philosophers do so much, or could he, if he would? "It was hard," says St. Austin, where he mentions the letter of Porphyry to Anebo, "it was hard for so great a philosopher to discover, to expose, and boldly to convict the whole diabolical society, which every little old Christian woman discovers at once, and detests openly. Quam quælibet anicula Christiana nec nosse cunctatur, et liberrimè detestatur." Thus the triumph of the gospel over ignorance and immorality, and the reformation of the world, by the publication of it, are frequently magnified. But when we consider the means of reforming mankind, which the heathen philosophers, and the Christian divines, have had in their turns, and compare the progress made in this great work by both, it will appear that the former had not sufficient means, (so far their complaints were well founded,) nor the latter a success proportionable to the means they had. In short, if Clarke's way of reasoning be good, some extraordinary and supernatural assistance to reform the world, is still wanting; for it would be impious to say, that a further revelation is just as necessary now as it was before the coming of Christ.

XXVI.

To speak of the want of sufficient means to propagate natural religion, distinctly from the want of a sufficient knowledge of it, which are often profusely confounded together, that the first which is true, may cover the last which is false, must be our next task.

There was no creed, nor any act of uniformity imposed on the heathen philosophers. But still it is not true, that the system of moral obligations, or natural religion, was to them a wide sea wherein they wandered without knowing their way, or having any guide. It is not true, that they were unable to make

* Vide the quotation in the Evid.

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out upon what principles originally, and for what end ultimately, the choice of virtue was to be made.* They had better guides than Clarke, whom it was in their power to follow, nature and reason; one pointed out their way with a steady hand, and the other was sufficient to lead them in it, the very purpose for which it was given. The original principles of this choice were strongly laid in the constitution of things, and these philosophers must have been stupid as well as blind, if they had not felt, as well as seen, that the ultimate end of this choice was the happiness of mankind. They felt it, they saw it, they proved it to others. Virtue was not only recommended as wise, and reasonable, and fit to be chosen, but surely it was established by them to be of plain necessity, and indispensable obligation; since it was taught to be the perfection of our nature, as well as the positive will of God, and since the greatest part of them did their utmost to establish a belief of rewards and punishments in a future life, that they might allure to virtue, and deter from vice, the more effectually. But the generality of mankind continued in their evil habits, notwithstanding all these doctrines, and all the institutions contrived to enforce them. What promised to be effectual in speculation, proved ineffectual in practice. Vice was checked, but virtue did not prevail. The conquest was never complete.

Shall we say that the reason of this was because the missionaries of natural religion, who set themselves in earnest about this excellent work, were few?† But this reason will not hold, for how few soever they might be in general, they were numerous enough at particular times, in particular places, and yet even then and there we do not find, that they made any proportionable progress, although they could not fail to do some good by their exhortations, instructions, and examples. Socrates, his scholars, and all the great men whom the Academy produced, may be reckoned a number of missionaries sufficient to preach the duties of natural religion, with full effect in such a city as Athens. Socrates set himself in good earnest, surely, about this excellent work. He went from street to street, and from one public place to another, as the apostles did some centuries afterwards in their dispersions. If he preached with the same simplicity, he preached with the same zeal. If he had not all the gifts of the spirit he had some of them no doubt; for though he could not work miracles to prove the divinity of his mission, he died to prove the truth of his doctrine. What was the effect of all this? He made a great, he could not make a good, man of his favorite disciple Alcibiades; and though he rendered, or contri-

* Evid. p. 176. 191. † Evid. p. 173.

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buted to render, the schools of philosophy nurseries of religion, as well as of learning, which were always open, and always crowded, yet how small a progress was made in the Athenian commonwealth towards the reformation of mankind? Missionaries were not wanting in this instance, and a greater number would not have had a greater effect.

Shall we say that the reason of this was, because many of the philosophers were so vicious themselves, that they contradicted their precepts by their examples, "ut cum eorum vitâ mirabiliter pugnet oratio?" This reason will not hold neither, and I might be surprised at Clarke for bringing it, if I did not consider him, like other polemical writers, accustomed to vend his arguments by tale rather than by weight, and ready to employ such as have a specious appearance, how weak soever they really are, in hopes that some of his readers may be caught by them. Tully boasts in his second Tusculan, as he does in all his writings, the wonderful effects of philosophy, and those which he mentions, are such as natural theology and moral philosophy can alone produce, "medetur animis, inanes solicitudines detrahit, cupiditatibus liberat, pellit timores." But philosophy cannot produce these, he says,* in all men alike, nor be of any great efficacy unless she works on a suitable and proper nature; for which reason philosophers themselves, they who have taught, disputed, and written on all these subjects, have been seldom influenced by them. Scarce here and there one is to be found who lives up to his own doctrines and rules of life. Tully pursues his invective against the levity, vanity, inconsistency, avarice, and other vices of these men; and Clarke imagined that this sketch of their characters would furnish an excellent reason the more, whereby to account for the little progress they made in reforming the world. But he should have been restrained from insisting on this argument, both by the reason of the thing, and by a regard to the order of which he was. If the vices of many among those who were missionaries of morality in the heathen world, disappointed the common endeavors of all; how came it to pass, that Christianity made so great a progress afterwards? How can the clergy of your church, or of ours, pretend that they contribute now, or ever did contribute, to the reformation of mankind? No age, whereof we have any certain anecdotes, can be pointed out, wherein all the vices that Tully imputes to most of the heathen philosophers, did not prevail among most of the Christian divines, with great circumstances of aggravation. They have had not only all the vices incident to human nature in com-

* Non idem potest apud omnes. Tum valet multum cum est idoneam complexa naturam.

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mon with other men, but they had the particular vices of their order, for such there are, and such I shall have occasion to show that there are. Read the entire passage, consult your memory, look around you, and then you shall tell me what you think of Clarke's argument. You shall tell it in my ear. I expect no more; for I know how desirous you are to keep fair with orders, whatever liberties you take with particular men. For my own part, who have not the same discretion, I will say boldly that the clergy both of your church and of mine, are, in general, the most negligent of missionaries, and fitter much to hinder by their example, than to promote by their doctrine, the advancement of religion, natural or revealed.

Shall we say that the sublime doctrines, and abstract arguments of Plato, and other philosophers, were by no means fitted for the bulk and common sort of mankind? Or shall we fix the reason of the little progress they made, in their ignorance of the whole scheme, order, and state of things? Should we do both like the author of the Evidences, we should, like him, contradict ourselves; because, if the doctrines of Plato, for instance, were too sublime, and his arguments too abstract, they must have been much more so had he known, and gone about to explain all that is called the whole scheme, order, and state of things.— It is marvellous to consider, how many of the most refined precepts of Christian morality were tanght by him, several centuries before Christ and his apostles taught them. Such were those about imitating God, and others that have been mentioned above. It is still more marvellous to consider, that some of the most profound mysteries of Christianity were taught by this philosopher, several centuries before they were revealed. Such was the doctrine of the Trinity, in explaining which if he advanced some errors, he did no more than many Christian divines have done from the most early ages of the church, no more than we are bound to believe that Whiston and Clarke himself have done, unless we renounce that orthodox profession of faith which all the fathers of the church have held, from those of the Nicean council down to Dr. Waterland, and my good uncle the earl of Nottingham. How this may be accounted for, I do not presume to determine, though I have somewhere or other presumed to guess. But this we may affirm,* that if Plato had known the method of God's governing the world, his design in creating mankind, the original dignity of human nature, the ground and circumstances of men's present corrupt condition, the manner of the divine interposition, necessary to their recovery, and the glorious end to which God intended finally to conduct them, as

* Evid. p. 176.

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well as he knew the system of a Trinity, of a future judgment, of a heaven, a hell, and a purgatory; he who is so often unintelligible now, would have been vastly more so. He would have been, therefore, less fitted than he was for the bulk and common sort of mankind, and for the great work of reformation.

Shall we say, finally, that the heathen philosophers were unequal to this great work, because their doctrines were not enforced by a divine authority? Even this reason will prove nothing; for the philosophers and lawgivers did enforce their doctrines and laws by a divine authority, and call a higher principle to the assistance of philosophy and bare reason. Zoroaster, Hostanes, the magi, the prophets and seers of Egypt, Minos, Pythagoras, Numa, in short, all the fathers of heathen theology, all those who founded or reformed religions and commonwealths, made these pretensions, and their pretensions were admitted. They were impostors, but they passed in vulgar opinion for persons divinely inspired and commissioned. Some good they did, but little that was permanent, not because they wanted the opinion of a divine authority for them, but because they employed it absurdly, or because even this opinion was not sufficient.

To what now are we reduced? Since the precepts and motives, offered by the best philosophers, have been never able to reform mankind effectually,* without the assistance of some higher principle, and some divine authority, nor even when both of these have been assumed, may we not be led to think, that such a reformation is impracticable? May we not conclude, from the experience of all ages, that no means can bring it about, and those which have been employed less than any? There is a perpetual conflict in the breast of every man, who endeavors to restrain his appetites, to govern his passions, and to make reason, as Tully expresses it, the law of his life.† Just such a conflict there is between virtue and vice, in the great commonwealth of mankind. If the conflict was not maintained by religious and civil institutions, the human state would be intolerable; and though it be maintained, as the success is various, the state is very imperfect. The method taken to fix this success on the right side, by calling in artificial theology, has contributed more to subdue reason than vice and immorality. Reason has been laid aside, natural religion has been no longer solely, nor so much as directly, concerned in the contest. Authority has usurped the place of one, superstition of the other; and these two have been opposed almost alone to the torrent of human passions, and to the disorders of mankind in all the countries of the world; so

* Evid. p. 198. † Tusc. Quest. Ibid.

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that, wherever philosophy and reason could lift up their heads, they have had the remedy to combat as well as the disease.

XXVII.

There is a country, into the antiquities of which we look further back than into those of any other, and where we may find examples to confirm and illustrate what is here said, by comparing the effects of natural religion, unmixed and uncorrupted, with those of artificial theology and superstition. The country, I mean, is China, whose traditions and histories deserve, at least, as much credit as those of ancient nations that have been known to us longer, and which our scholars quote with so much assurance. Now natural religion seems to have been preserved more pure and unmixed in this country than in any other, and for a longer time from that when it was first inhabited, and government was first established in it.* The ancient Chinese held it unlawful to dispute about the divine nature, about the attributes of God, the exercise of his power, or the conduct of his providence; and it seems very plain that the concise manner in which their sages expressed themselves, whenever they spoke of the Supreme Being, and upon which their refining successors have endeavored to found, in part at least, their atheism, proceeded from this modest, this reasonable, and this pious principle. They observed the order of nature, and from thence they deduced all the rules of private morality and public policy. To compare his conduct with the law of heaven and earth,† is the character of a perfect prince, in the works of Confucius. That reason should preside over passion, was the great rule of life, and to walk according to it, was to walk in the great highway of life.‡ Thus they were led by simple and plain reasonings, from the works to the will of God, and to three kinds of moral obligations, to those of an individual, of the member of a family, and of the member of a political society. Bare reason enforced so well the practice of natural religion, by the laws and constitutions of this empire, and the duties of it became so habitual by education and custom, that this people enjoyed under their two first imperial families, which continued eleven hundred years, all the blessings of public and private virtue that humanity is capable of enjoying. So we must understand the descriptions of this golden age; for though the Chinese lived in a state of innocence and simpli-

* Scient. Sinica.

† Confert res à se gestas cum cœli terræque lege.

‡ Orbis universalis regula, regia humani generis via.

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city whilst it lasted, yet as they were subject, like other nations, to physical evils, so may we assure ourselves that they were neither infallible nor impeccable, nor therefore entirely exempt from moral evil. It is enough for the honor of reason, and of natural religion, that these principles, enforced by civil authority, appear in this instance to have answered the purposes of true religion much better by themselves, than these purposes have been ever answered by all the expedients, and all the adventitious helps, that philosophers, legislators, and priests have devised.

Whether any other nation afforded an example of the same kind, we know not. But this we know, that when other nations begin to appear, they appear already under the influence of absurd theology and gross superstition, and that the Chinese began in the same remote antiquity to fall into the same errors, and all the consequences of them. Under their third imperial family, the affectation of imagining and unfolding mysteries, and of explaining the first principle of all things, grew into fashion amongst them, and the table of Fohi, or the book Yekim, which is nothing more than a draught of sixty-four figures, composed of three hundred and eighty-four lines, some broken, and some entire, furnished to the studious labors of Venvam and Cheucum, and other commentators, as much sublime knowledge as ever the first chapter of Genesis furnished to a profound cabbalist or whimsical divine. From the various changes, and different combinations of these lines, they proceeded, as Pythagoras did from numbers, and Plato from immaterial forms and incorporeal essences, to erect systems of natural and moral philosophy. When they had once departed from simplicity and truth, in the search of mystery, they soon imagined themselves capable of attaining unattainable knowledge; the most chimerical passed for real, and they boasted of nothing less than to explain the whole scheme, order, and state of things. Thus reason was abused by pretended science, and natural religion was deformed by metaphysical speculations, and superstitious devotions.

Li Lao Kium was a philosopher of the same age with Confucius, and both of them of the same with Pythagoras. Whether the Chinese and the Samian had the same masters, I know not. But if they had, these masters were rather Indian gymnosophists than Hebrew prophets. Several circumstances incline to think so. The dogma, particularly, in the Taosu, where it is said that the first reason produced one, one two, two three, and three all things, is a jargon very like to that of Pythagoras which Diogenes Laertius has preserved, which he and Li Lao Kium might have learned in India, but which there is no pretence to suspect that the latter could have learned in Palestine. The Chinese taught

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the same moral philosophy that had been always taught in China, but he took advantage of the metaphysical folly which prevailed at that time, and which even Confucius had countenanced, to broach a new and a most extravagant theology. He founded it, perhaps, on some interpretations of the book Yekim; but however he founded it, he established it with so much success that he himself was worshipped at last: temples and statues were erected to many of his sect, all that imposture could impose on credulity was imposed, natural theology was abominably corrupted, and a ridiculous external service took the place in great measure, of real virtue and true devotion.

This sect prepared the way for another, which had prevailed in India near a thousand years before our Christian era, but was not introduced into China till sixty-five years after it. This sect was that of Foë, who raised a spiritual empire in the East, that has equalled, if not exceeded, all others, under different forms and appellations, in extent and duration. Foë lived in a desert, under the care of four jogues, or gymnosophists, till he was thirty years old. Then he appeared in the world, assumed divinity, and declared himself to be the Saviour of men, for whose sakes he had condescended to be born, that he might recover them from their errors, expiate their sins, and lead them into the way of being happy hereafter; for he threatened future punishments to those who did not believe in him, nor submit to his doctrines. Voluminous legends of miracles wrought at his birth, and in the course of his life, were published by ten of his disciples. Well might they be voluminous, since his pretended mission lasted nine and forty years, and we may assure ourselves that attestations of them were not wanting, since the number of proselytes he made in that time was immense. They were divided in different classes. To believe implicitly, and to observe the rules of morality were required from all, and the least credible austerities were practised by some, as they continue to be at this day.

Both these religions are still subsisting in China. What has been the effect of them? The ancient laws and customs of the empire are inviolably kept, and good government is maintained by them, independently of these. But are the Chinese grown better men? No. They build monasteries for bonzes, they endow them richly, they adorn their pagods or temples, they prostrate themselves, they pray, they make their offerings, and they burn gilded paper in them, after which they rob or cheat without scruple, and indulge themselves in practices which natural religion abhors the most. There is something worse than this. The true principles of religion being removed, and these fantastic principles placed in lieu of them, the foundation of all

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religion is sapped at once. They who cannot persuade themselves that the religion they see practised is a service fit to be paid to a Supreme Being, nor consequently required by any such being, slide easily from the belief that there is no religion, to the belief that there is no God. This happened in China, where the literati, or learned men, are, in truth, a sect of atheists, and theism seems to be the portion of the vulgar alone. Such has been, and is at this day the effect of artificial theology, and superstitious devotion in that country. The Jesuits, from whose relations, as from the best authority in this case, I have taken what I have said on the subject, pretend that Foë, or Xaca himself, gave occasion to the atheism that has been since established, by declaring, before his death, to some of his disciples, his inward doctrine, which transpired afterwards. He confessed, they say, that he had concealed the truth under the veil of types, of metaphors, and parables; that vacuity and inanition were the first principles of all things, beyond which nothing was to be sought, because nothing was to be found. What is meant by the terms that the Jesuits translate "vacuum et inane," I know not, nor is it worth our while to guess. Thus much is plain, the consequence of refining in matters of religion, beyond the obvious dictates of nature and reason, has been superstition, and enthusiasm, or atheism, not reformation of manners in China.

XXVIII.

If we return now to those countries with which we are better acquainted, we shall find in them much the same course of things. We shall find, indeed, natural religion no where established in its full extent and purity, as it seems to have been once in China. Some first principles of it were known and practised by people the least civilised, as Justin* represents them to have been by the Scythians. No people were wholly ignorant of them, no sort of government could subsist without them. But then, as their light shone dimly, among these half savages, through the clouds of a superstition I somewhere called natural, and not improperly, we shall find this light actually obscured and put out, in great part, among the most civilised and learned nations. Instead of dispelling these clouds, and improving natural religion, they had increased by fantastic knowledge what ignorance had begun, and we trace the same ill consequences of pretended revelations, and artificial theology, on this side the Ganges, as we have traced, on the other, the abominable conse-

* L. ii, c. 2.

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quences which have followed establishments made on the ruins of natural religion.

It is true that the heathen philosophers were unable to propagate natural religion, and to reform the manners of men effectually. But it is not true that they were so for the reasons Clarke gives, which have been shown, I think, to be futile and insufficient. They were so for another reason principally, which has been touched, and requires to be more fully developed. The reason is, that they proceeded, in the doctor's own method, to lay the first principles of all religion, and to reason from them.

The doctor, whom I cite so often, because his book is the last I have read on this subject, and has been received with the greatest applause, repeats over and over, and very dogmatically, such maxims as these, "that goodness, and justice, and all the moral attributes are the same in God, as they are in our ideas; that the relations, respects, and proportions of things are just such as they appear to be to our understandings; that from hence there results a rule, which is the nature and reason of things; that this rule is common to God and man; that it is the law of all his actions in the government of the world; and that, as it always determines his will, it should always determine ours." From this assumed knowledge of the divine attributes, and of the abstract nature and reason of things, the most extravagant opinions concerning the will of God, and the most audacious judgments on the conduct and dispensations of his providence, have been deduced. How should it be otherwise? They who reason *à posteriori* from the constitution of the human system, and from the works of God, have indeed a rule to go by, precise, invariable, certain. But they who reason *à priori* from the moral attributes of God, and from the abstract nature and reason of things, have no such rule. Theists will concur in ascribing all possible perfections to the Supreme Being, but they will always differ when they descend into any detail, and presume to be particular about them, as they always have differed in their notions of these perfections, and consequently in the application of them. I have said, I believe, already, and I shall not recall what is said, agreeably to universal and constant experience, that the eternal reason of things, founded in the consideration of their abstract nature, is, for the most part, as we see it employed by believers and infidels, by the orthodox and the heterodox, nothing better than the reason of party, of prejudice, of system, and of profession. Yet this is the method which some men prescribe, and which Clarke* declares to be, of all others, the best and clearest, the certainest and most universal

* Evid. p. 119.

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that the light of nature affords to discover the will of God in matters of morality, and to account for the dispensations and conduct of his providence. This author goes even further, and the other method is styled by him* a collateral consideration which may come in aid of the former, nothing more. This other method, however, extends as far as human wants require, and human knowledge can reach. Where it does not extend the want is imaginary, and the knowledge fantastic; and if philosophers and divines had aimed at establishing the belief of a Supreme Being, and the duties of natural religion alone, they might, and they would have been contented with it.

But they meant something more. They aimed at superiority and fame, at power and riches. He who had never presumed to define the moral attributes of an all-perfect Being, who contented himself to know that such a being existed by the necessity of his nature, and that his wisdom and power are infinite; he who had never troubled himself about eternal respects, relations, and proportions of things, and collected the will, as he collected the existence of this Being *à posteriori;* he, I say, knew as much of God, and of his duty to God and man, as natural religion required that he should know. But it was for the interest of philosophers and priests, that men should think there was much more to be known; and if those of Egypt had taught nothing more than natural theology, instead of theurgic magic, nothing more than the plain duties of religion, instead of mysterious rites; it is highly probable the Mercuries would not have been honored, as they were, in all succeeding ages, nor the clergy have possessed a third part of the whole revenue of the kingdom.

Such as have been mentioned were the principles on which artificial theology arose among the heathens, and as the principles were laid neither in reason nor in truth, which are always one, it is no wonder that this theology became as various as error could make it. Some of the motives to invent and embrace it, were such likewise as have been mentioned. I say, some; because we may well conceive that when principles, not only false, but vague like these, had been once adopted by the delirium of metaphysics, the enthusiasm of superstition, or the prejudices of ignorance, the men who had been accustomed to reason upon them, and to take for true every thing that use had made familiar, might run into the greatest absurdities, sometimes without having any bad motive, nay with a pious intention of promoting true religion, and of attaching men to it, by a greater authority, and by greater hopes and fears. This might be the case of many, as we shall easily believe, if we consider what has passed in later

* Evid. p. 119.

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days. But however it was brought about, art took everywhere the place of nature, and faith of reason. Artificial theology spread far and wide; philosophers taught it; lawgivers established it; priests improved it: here it was employed to enforce, there it was substituted to natural religion: the main principles of it, and even particular opinions, and local institutions have been variously mingled in different systems, and are to be discerned in them even now. This has happened naturally, and almost necessarily. All these systems lean on certain primitive notions, which the human mind is so prone to frame or to receive. The same affections and passions maintain them, work upon them, and direct them in different imaginations. The matter is the same, the form alone is changed.

XXIX.

Among many doctrines that were taught by those who pretended to explain the whole scheme, and order of divine economy with respect to man, that of rewards and punishments in a future state was one. It began to be taught long before we have any light into antiquity, and when we begin to have any, we find it established. How powerful is the desire of continuing to exist? How predominant is the pride of the human heart? Nothing seems more natural to man, than to wish to live without restraint or fear, and yet how ready was the multitude, in the pagan world, to embrace the hope of immortality, though it was accompanied with the fear of damnation? Like the elementary people of the cabbalists,* one may think, they would have chosen to be damned eternally, rather than to cease to exist. But every one was flattered by a system that raised him, in imagination, above corporeal nature, as every one was at liberty to flatter himself further, that he should pass this immortality in the fellowship of the gods, "in contubernio deorum."

The hypothesis of a life after this, especially when it was accompanied by that of a life preceding this, which was founded on a supposed metempsychosis that several systems of religion admitted, served two purposes. It furnished an answer to the accusation which atheists brought, and which theists were too ready to admit in those days, as well as in ours, of unjust dispensations of Providence, in the distribution of good and evil. This purpose seems very unnecessary to me, who am firmly persuaded that the accusation is a mere sophism, and void of any foundation. But the other purpose was, no doubt, very

* Vid. Borri's Letters.

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necessary, since the belief of future rewards and punishments could not fail to have some effect on the manners of men, to encourage virtue, and to restrain vice. For this purpose the doctrine was strongly inculcated from time immemorial. Egypt was the great mistress of religion, as well as of arts and sciences, and the doctrines and rites of her church were dispersed wherever she sent her colonies; these of the "mythologia de inferis" among the rest. Whatever Melampus, Cadmus, and others carried into Greece, Orpheus carried these. He propagated them by his verses and his institutions. But it was your Homer who spread them most, and gave them the greatest vogue by his Odyssey and Iliad, those stupendous works, which Virgil alone could imitate, and you translate, with success.

One cannot see, without surprise, a doctrine so useful to all religions, and therefore incorporated into all the systems of paganism, left wholly out of that of the Jews. Many probable reasons might be brought to show that it was an Egyptian doctrine before the exode, and this particularly, that it was propagated from Egypt so soon at least afterwards, by all those who were instructed, like Moses, in the wisdom of that people. He transported much of this wisdom into the scheme of religion and government, which he gave the Israelites; and among other things certain rites, which may seem to allude or have a remote relation to this very doctrine. Though this doctrine, therefore, had not been that of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he might have adopted it with as little scruple, as he did many customs and institutions purely Egyptian. He had to do with a rebellious, but a superstitious people. In the first character, they made it necessary that he should neglect nothing which might add weight to his ordinances, and contribute to keep them in awe. In the second, their disposition was extremely proper to receive such a doctrine, and to be influenced by it. Shall we say that an hypothesis of future rewards and punishments was useless among a people who lived under a theocracy, and that the future judge of other people was their immediate judge and king, who resided in the midst of them, and who dealt out rewards and punishments on every occasion? Why then were so many precautions taken? Why was a solemn covenant made with God, as with a temporal prince? Why were so many promises and threatenings of rewards and punishments, temporal indeed, but future and contingent, as we find in the book of Deuteronomy, most pathetically held out by Moses? Would there have been any more impropriety in holding out those of one kind, than those of another, because the Supreme Being, who disposed and ordered both, was in a particular manner present among them? Would an addition of

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rewards and punishments more remote, but eternal, and in all respects far greater to the catalogue, have had no effect? I think neither of these things can be said.

What shall we say then? How came it to pass this addition was not made? I will mention what occurs to me, and shall not be over solicitous about the weight that my reflection may deserve. If the doctrines of the immortality of the soul, and of a future state, had been revealed to Moses, that he might teach them to the Israelites, he would have taught them most certainly. But he did not teach them. They were, therefore, not revealed to him. Why they were not so revealed, some pert divine, or other, will be ready to tell you. For me, I dare not presume to guess. But this I may presume to advance, that since these doctrines were not revealed by God, to his servant Moses, it is highly probable, that this legislator made a scruple of teaching them to the Israelites, howsoever well instructed he might be in them himself, and howsoever useful to government he might think them. The superstitious and idolatrous rites of the Egyptians, like those of other nations, were founded on the polytheism and the mythology that prevailed, and were suffered to prevail among the vulgar, and that made the sum of their religion. It seemed to be a point of policy to direct all these absurd opinions and practices to the service of government, instead of attempting to root them out. But then the great difference between rude and ignorant nations, and such as were civilised and learned like the Egyptians, seems to have been this, that the former had no other system of religion than these absurd opinions and practices, whereas the latter had an inward, as well as an outward doctrine. There is reason to believe, that natural theology and natural religion had been taught and practised in the ancient Theban dynasty; and it is probable, that they continued to be an inward doctrine in the rest of Egypt, whilst polytheism, idolatry, and all the mysteries, all the impieties, and all the follies of magic, were the outward doctrine. Moses might be let into a knowledge of both, and under the patronage of the princes, whose foundling he was, he might be initiated into those mysteries, where the secret doctrine alone was taught, and the outward was exploded. But we cannot imagine, that the children of Israel, in general, enjoyed the same privilege, nor that the masters were so lavish to their slaves of a favor so distinguished, and often so hard to obtain. No. The children of Israel knew nothing more than the outside of the religion of Egypt, and if the doctrine we speak of was known to them, it was known only in the superstitious rites, and with all the fabulous circumstances in which it was dressed up and presented to vulgar belief. It would have been hard, therefore,

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to teach or to renew this doctrine in the minds of the Israelites, without giving them an occasion the more to recall the polytheistical fables, and practise the idolatrous rites they had learned during their captivity. Rites and ceremonies are often so equivocal, that they may be applied to very different doctrines. But when they are so closely connected with one doctrine, that they are not applicable to another, to teach the doctrine is, in some sort to teach the rites and ceremonies, and to authorise the fables on which they are founded. Moses, therefore, being at liberty to teach this doctrine of rewards and punishments in a future state, or not to teach it, might very well choose the latter; though he indulged the Israelites on account of the hardness of their hearts, and by the divine permission, as it is presumed, in several observances and customs which did not lead directly, though even they did so, perhaps, in consequence, to the polytheism and idolatry of Egypt. But I return to Greece.

XXX.

The seeds of artificial theology and superstitious devotion, for they go always together, which Orpheus and other Egyptian missionaries had sowed, were cultivated by theistical philosophers, and the doctrine of a future state particularly. If Pythagoras reported, that the soul of Hesiod was tied to a brazen column, and the soul of Homer hung upon a tree, for their temerity in ascribing human passions, and the rules of human conduct even to the father of gods and men, as some traditions say, one would be tempted to think, that he applied this doctrine of a future state to enforce natural religion alone. But we should deceive ourselves greatly if we thought so. We have none of his writings, if he did write. But we know from Diogenes Laërtius, from Porphyry, from Jamblichus, and from other authorities, that he imported from Egypt and the eastern nations an immense stock of the theology and superstition which were in vogue amongst them. If inspiration was not the least, it was not the greatest of his pretensions. He inveloped his doctrines in mystery to make them pass for divine, laid the foundations of them out of the ken of human reason, and acquired a great reputation in metaphysics and divine philosophy, by the usual method, by not being understood.

I pass to Socrates and Plato. The first devoted himself to the reformation of his countrymen with unexampled zeal, and as St. Paul was the apostle of the gentiles in revealed, we may say that Socrates was the same in natural religion. There was greater simplicity, and less heat of imagination, in the master

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than in the scholar. Sober prose was the language of one. A poetical enthusiasm was that of the other. One was fitter to reform his own age by his discourses, the other to create the admiration of posterity by his writings. Good sense and truth served the purpose of one much less than wit and beauty of style served the purpose of the other. The very extravagances of Plato, for which he deserved at least as much as Homer to be banished out of his own Utopia, recommended him to after ages; and there have been many, as there are still some, who would say, like Tully in one of his rants, "errare mehercule malo cum Platone, quam cum istis vere sentire." But notwithstanding the difference I make, and which is true, in general, between these philosophers, notwithstanding the accusation which Xenophon, who took minutes of the discourses of Socrates, laid against Plato for corrupting the doctrine of their common master, it is certain, and Xenophon himself might be brought to prove, that if Socrates did not say every thing which Plato made him say, yet he lost himself sometimes in clouds of metaphysics, as much as he was afraid to do in those of physics, from whence he has been so much applauded for bringing philosophy down to the affairs of human life, to things of real use, and to knowledge within our reach. How could it be otherwise? Socrates was a great reasoner *à priori* as well as Plato, even in the establishmene of natural religion. To contemplate God, or the eternal ideas which exist in God, and to abstract the soul from corporeal sense were soon made, by the encouragement which this school, the senate of philosophy, gave to such theology, the two great objects of it; so that the best of theistical philosophers, were, in effect, eunomians, long before that bishop of Cyzicus lived, who boasted that he knew God as well as God knew himself. Such were the principles of that artificial theology which the Greeks had brought from Egypt and Asia, which they carried back thither with all their own improvements, which was dispersed from these countries north and south, east and west, and in the glare of which men lost sight of natural religion.

What philosophers began, priests carried on with no small advantage to themselves, but without any to religion. I will not say, as generally as some have done, that they made it no part of their business to teach the people virtue, nor any thing more than the tricks of religion,* because it is not strictly true, and Mr. Locke, in his zeal against priestcraft, asserted a little too much. The schools of the philosophers were indeed the schools of morality; but even the tricks of religion had some intention to promote it. This only I will say, and it is enough. The refor-

* Vid. Reasonab. of Christianity.

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mation of mankind was not their principal aim, and the little they did to deter men from vice was done in a method that could not fail to have, as, in fact, it had, a contrary effect. The observation of ceremonies, of feasts, and solemnities that had no foundation in reason, and that were arbitrarily prescribed by ecclesiastical discipline, though sometimes under the pretence of revelation, were made the chief means of pleasing the gods, and of pacifying them when they were angry. From hence two great mischiefs arose. Religion became form and ceremony, and the observation of forms and ceremonies of greater moment than the practice of moral duties, though the practice of these was recommended too. This cannot be illustrated better than by the example of your church. No one can say, that she allows men to cheat and to rob one another. On the contrary, she requires that they should be just in all their dealings. But yet absolution for fraud or theft will be obtained from the priest, who cannot give it for eating a slice of meat on the vigil of some saint. Thus artificial theology and superstition oppressed true religion, and priests found the secret of persuading mankind, that God was better pleased with obedience to their laws than to his own.

Thus too sins were multiplied; and with them the terrors of an incensed deity. But the same priests who spread the terrors, showed easy means of expiating the sins that caused them.—Wherever superstition prevails, those sins which the priests make, by forbidding what the law of nature has left indifferent, or by imposing duties that have no relation to true religion, will be always esteemed the greatest. Sins, therefore, which are no sins, may be expiated very properly by punishments, which are no punishments, and several ceremonies performed may atone for several omitted. But the abuse is abominable when the same expiations and atonements are applied to real sins, and priests do little else than dispense arbitrarily with the laws of nature which are the laws of God. That no repentance was required in these cases by the pagan divines, I do not say. The very forms used in the celebration of their mysteries seem to show that it was, and that the impenitent could not be initiated. But this very repentance was little, if any thing, more than matter of form, confession, some temporary penance, ablutions, purifications, and other tricks of regeneration. Amendment, without these, was impracticable or insufficient, and with these, which might be repeated as often as occasion required, unnecessary, so that Mr. Locke had reason to say the priests sold good penny-worths. On the whole matter, if men were more powerfully allured to virtue, and deterred from vice, by the hopes and fears of a future state held out to every one in

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particular, than they could be by the consequences to mankind in general, of observing or violating natural religion, and by the force of civil laws; yet, in the religions we speak of, one part of the system defeated the other. Some body has observed, Mezeray I think, that the monstrous crimes so frequent in the devout, that is, in the bigot ages of the Christian church, were encouraged by this very devotion. Men were enough bigots to believe, that the pardon of God might be obtained for money, or possessions given to his priests, and that crimes of the blackest dye might be expiated by undertaking a pilgrimage, in person, or by proxy, to Rome, "ad limen apostolorum." This traffic, for such it was, became so frequent, that, even in times less ancient, the church of Rome found it necessary to publish a tariff, or book of rates, which I have seen in print,* wherein the price is set over against every sin, lest purchasers should be imposed upon; and such sins are specified, as the most polluted imagination would hardly conceive. If this abuse was not so exorbitant in the pagan as in the Christian church, something of the same kind must have been practised wherever men were taught to fear an angry God, and to believe, at the same time, that they could pacify him with offerings and sacrifices, or, to use an expression of Plato's compound with him as they would with an usurer.

This single reason will account better for the small progress that was made by the heathen philosophers, in reforming mankind, than all those that Clarke brings. But there is another, and a greater, mischief still behind. Religion gave occasion to atheism, as dogmatism did to scepticism. Superstitious worship, founded in absurd opinions concerning the divine nature, had an effect, in that age, which I wish it had never had since. Diagoras, for instance, might assume that such a superstitious worship as he beheld could be paid to fictitious gods alone, and seeing no other worship, he might conclude there were no other gods;—From the ridiculous worship, and the absurd theology that prevailed in all the countries they knew, both he, and Theodorus, who lived more than twenty Olympiads after him, and many more avowed or concealed atheists, might draw the same conclusions, and be mad enough not to discern that a few local observations were not sufficient to invalidate a proposition that might be true independently of them, and that there might be a God, and a true worship of him, though all the gods of Greece were fictitious. and the adoration of them was mere superstition.

These men were plunged at once, and by indignation, as it

* In the late Charles Bernard's Library.

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were, into atheism; whilst others went into it by dint of philosophical refinements more leisurely, less directly, and some of them against the primitive doctrines of their own schools.

XXXI.

Let us consider what happened in the Academy, and what the consequence was of all that metaphysical theology which the founder was supposed, by his immediate successors, and by other philosophers, to have taught dogmatically. If Speusippus, Xenocrates, Crates, Crantor, and Polemo did not teach exactly the same dogmas, they taught on the same principles of chimerical knowledge that their founder had done; and, in this sense, it might be said, "quæ acceperant tuebantur." Other sects of Dogmastists arose at the same time, and among the rest one which gave a principal occasion to that revolution in the Academy which Arcesilaus began, and Carneades improved. The sect, I mean, was that of the Stoics, concerning whom it is true to say, that their theology and their moral philosophy were alike absurd. By one they drew the divinity down to be a sort of plastic, intelligent, fiery nature. By the other, they strained their notions of human wisdom and virtue so high, that man was obliged to God for neither: he gave them to himself and God and man were in these respects nearly on a level.

Zeno, who founded the Portic, had been an auditor in the Academy, and was accused of pirating his philosophy from the lessons of Xenocrates and Polemo, when he set up his school as a rival to the other. Polemo had taught, that the world was God, for instance: and Zeno had adopted this among other extravagances. When the contest ran high between him and Arcesilaus, the latter saw by this instance, and by many, that he lay under a double disadvantage. He had the doctrines of his own school to defend, and it was no easy task to defend, by reason, a system of imagination. His adversaries had often the authority of his own school, and of the founder of it, to urge against him, when he attacked them even in their weakest parts. He changed, therefore, his method of philosophising. No matter whether he did it, as Lucullus says, by introducing a new one, or, as Cicero affirms,* by reviving and avowing the old one. When the maxim was established, that nothing could be known, "nihil cognosci, nihil percipi, nihil sciri posse," the Academicians could always attack, and never be attacked. This I take to have been the political secret of Arcesilaus. But whatever

* In Academ.

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his secret was, he established scepticism: and Socrates and Plato had given him but too much reason, to make it the Academical principle. As there was little difference, except in name, between the second and third Academy, so there was little that it is easy or worth our while to ascertain, between this fact, and another founded, about the same time, by that melancholy madman Pyrrho. One acknowledged probability: both denied certainty.

The Pyrrhonian is against all sides: and all sides are against him. He is a common enemy, "hostis philosophici generis." The Academician would pass, if he could, for a neuter, who is for no side, nor against any; or else for a trimmer, who changes sides often, and finds the probable sometimes on one, sometimes on the other. Tully, most of whose works are come down to us, is a standing portrait in our sight of the true Academician. In his Academical Questions he opposes, to Lucullus, the variety, and the repugnancy, of all the philosophical systems. In his books, about the Nature of Gods, he makes Cotta oppose the Epicureans and the Stoicians both in their turns. The conclusion is always against embracing any of these systems, and so far doubtless he concluded well. But here lay the error. When he assented to the probability of some, and to the certainty of no proposition whatever, he confounded truth with falsehood, as Lucullus objects to him that he did: just as much as the sect of Lucullus, or any other Dogmatists, who put every thing they advanced into the same class of certainty. The Stoicians would have assented to this proposition, "it is now light in a full sunshine," with the same assurance, and with no more than they would have assented at any other time to this, "the world is a wise being." Such has been the Dogmatical impertinence, for it deserves this name, of all those in every age, and in every sect of philosophy or religion, who have imagined they could impose by authority, or who have had the affectation of framing complete systems, concerning the universal order and state of things, divine and human. It is this practice which had laid the men who submitted to it under a sort of intellectual tyranny, and which has driven those, who have not submitted to it, into a sort of intellectual anarchy. The fault of all lies at the door of the Dogmatist; for there is in science, as there is in government, a middle between tyranny and anarchy, far better than either of them. I will explain myself by two examples: and they shall be very modern, that the ancients may not blush alone.

One of the Crozats, a family well known at Paris, went to take his leave of Clement the Eleventh, before he returned from Rome. The holy father asked, whether he had finished his

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purchase of a certain collection of paintings? Crozat answered, that he had not; that there were several obscene pieces in the collection, and that the confessors, in his country, would not allow him to keep them. The pope reflected on this occasion, with no small concern, on the number of Jansenits, who teach a more rigid morality, and who abound in the church of France. However, said the pontiff, you might conclude your purchase, because it would be easy to sell such of those paintings, as your confessor would not suffer you to keep. Crozat replied, that the same confessors, who would not suffer him to keep them, would as little permit him to sell them, and thereby contribute to the sin of another. Clement smiled at the scruple, and proposed an expedient. Though your confessor, said his holiness, should object, if you sold these pictures to Catholics, he could have no objection to make, if you sold them to heretics, to the English for instance. That is, the English neither believe in me, nor in any thing like me; they had, therefore, as good believe in nothing; they are, therefore, damned, and a sin the more will do none of them any great harm.

The other example shall be that of a better divine perhaps than the Pope but of as great a dogmatist. Clarke undertook to demonstrate, not only the being and attributes of God, and the obligations of natural religion by reason; but even the truth and certainty of Christian revelation. Now the latter of these being his ultimate view, it was necessary that he should prove the two first in such a manner, and by such arguments, as were not always the best and the most persuasive, but were the fittest to demonstrate, on pretended grounds of reason, such a scheme, order and state of things as were agreeable to Christian revelation, and to the received principles of the church. If he could not carry reason with him throughout, he resolved to carry some appearances of it, and for that purpose he argues in such a manner and attempts to establish such notions from the first, as he flattered himself would secure these appearances to him on every part of his subject, assisted with all the skill, all the subtilty, and all the plausibility, he was able to employ. When he is to prove, that the first cause is an intelligent cause, without which he has proved in effect nothing, he has recourse to arguments *à posteriori*. There are, indeed, no others, and he owns as much; for which reason he might have been more favorable to them, than I have observed already that he was. But he could not have established by them some things, that he hoped to establish by the others, as I shall have occasion to show more fully, when I come to vindicate Providence against the joint accusations of atheists and divines. All that I mean and that is to my purpose to observe here is this. A necessary connection between the

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natural and moral attributes of God no man, who believes in him, will deny; all the perfections of an all-perfect Being, must be consistent and connected; to be otherwise would be imperfection. Divines therefore will have nothing on this head with which to reproach any true theist: and they had best take care that the true theist has no just occasion to reproach them for setting these attributes at variance, as he might have, if he followed the rule Clarke quotes from Tully,* and considered the consequences of their opinions without regarding what they affirm, nor how honorably they may seem to speak of some particular attributes of God.† But that which may be reproached to Clarke, and for which I produce this example, is, that when he has asserted justice, and goodness, and the rest of the moral attributes to be in God, just what they are in our imperfect unsteady, complex ideas: when he has asserted that the rule according to which God exercises these attributes, the nature and reason of things resulting from the fitness and unfitness of their relations, is obvious to the understandings of all intelligent beings, and when he has rather repeated these bold propositions over and over than proved them (for how should he prove them?) he triumphs in this foolish and wicked rhodomontade, that the man who denies the moral attributes, such as he makes them to be, for moral attributes, in general, are not concerned, may be reduced to a necessity of denying the natural likewise, and consequently into absolute atheism. Your Pope pretends to make universal and infallible decrees in matters of religion; our doctor infallible demonstrations: and both of them send every one to the devil, who does not believe in them, and in all cases like them.

XXXII.

Though I do not believe Plato to have been a Dogmatist, even when he appears such, on the faith of St. Austin, any more than I believe Arcesilaus to have disguised his real sentiments, and to have continued a dogmatist, even when he avowed scepticism, on the faith of the same saint, or of a passage in Sextus Empiricus; yet must it be owned that Socrates and he laid the foundation of a metaphysical dogmatism, which the latter Pythagoricians and Platonicians revived long afterwards, and which prevails to this day. It was a maxim of theirs, that we may have

* Quasi ego id curem quid ille aiat aut neget: illud quæro quid ei consentaneum sit dicere.—De Fin. l. 2.

† Evid. p. 22.

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knowledge concerning things perceptible by intellect, but opinion only concerning things perceptible by sense; and it was on the strength of this maxim, perhaps, that the former, after he had brought philosophy down from the clouds, went up thither again to find the principles of morality, and the rules of human life.—Whether we pretend, like those philosophers, to contemplate immaterial forms, and the eternal ideal archetypes that exist in God, or whether we assert, that all the relations of things appear to us what they are absolutely and necessarily in themselves, there is an infallible, though human criterion established to which, says Clark, and he quotes the Bible for it, even God himself appeals.

From such knowledge as this, knowledge which no man ever had, nor could have, the whole system of artificial theology which corrupted natural religion, was deduced. It served in no sort to promote the reformation of mankind, and it involved the professors of it in a thousand difficulties and disputes that rendered them ridiculous to one another and every one perhaps to himself, unless there were some as enthusiastical and as mad in those days as Plotinus, Porphyry, Jamblicus, and others grew to be after the beginning of Christianity. Thus it came about that the great theological, that is, the Platonic school went from one extreme into another. It suited the vanity of these philosophers better to assert that nothing was to be known in general, than to own that the reputation of their school in particular had been raised on a fantastic science: and after exercising their wit to prove that they were masters of divine knowledge, they exercised it to prove that they knew nothing, no not the existence of a Supreme Being.

The truth is, that the philosophy of the Academy became little more than an exercise of wit and eloquence. Tully purges himself, in one place, from the imputation of engaging in the Academical sect on these motives, or on that of loving to dispute;* and yet he confesses, in the second Tusculan, that the custom of disputing on every side pleased him, because it was "maxima dicendi exercitatio." But whatever engaged him in it, his engagements carried him very far, as we may see in his books of the Nature of the Gods. I cite these, because they serve extremely to my purpose, which is to show, by contrasting the Stoicians and the Academicians together (for the Epicureans cannot have their place here, though they too were dogmatists) how unfit the philosophers of both these schools, were, from very opposite causes and different extremes, to establish the fundamental principle of true religion, or indeed to establish any thing. The discourse of

* Ostentatione aliqua—aut studio certandi.

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Balbus is a rhapsody of sense and nonsense, of very good arguments *à posteriori*, that there is a God, "esse aliquod numen præstantissimæ mentis," of sophistical syllogysms to prove the same thing *à priori*, and of idle traditions, gravely produced, to confirm the whole by fact as well as reason. All this he advances with equal assurance, the weak and the strong, the false and the true. Balbus could do no otherwise. He had the task of explaining and defending artificial, not natural theology superstition, not religion. He was obliged, therefore, as all they are whose ultimate end is error, to proceed from the first on principles ill assumed, to reason falsely, and to conclude precariously, but dogmatically. The discourse of Cotta is an ingenious declamation, wherein he refutes the stoical system, and renders it ridiculous. But then he disputes so vehemently against it, and his arguments extend so far, that Tully* makes his own brother accuse the pontiff directly, and himself by consequence indirectly, of atheism. "Studio contra stoicos disserendi, deos mihi videtur funditus tollere." What says Tully in his own name? He tells his brother, that Cotta disputes in that manner, rather to confute the Stoics, than to destroy the religion of mankind "——magis ——quam ut hominum deleat religionem." But Quinctus answers, that is, Tully makes him answer, he was not the bubble of an artifice, employed to save the appearance of departing from the public religious institutions, "ne communi jure migrare videatur." When you join to this short conversation, the expression, which concludes the third book of the Nature of the Gods, where Tully says very drily, that the disputation of Balbus seemed to him the most probable "ad veritatis similitudinem propensior," you will see that, if the Academicians did not profess atheism, because they could profess nothing, yet some of them might esteem this to be the most probable opinion, as Tully esteemed that of theism to be, even when the absurdities of the Portic were blended with it or deduced from it. Thus doubt, concerning the existence of any superior Being, arose in the same school, from which so much artificial theology had been propagated: and the sublime doctrines of the divine Plato ended in arrant scepticism as they led to it, and as he designed they should if the man in the world who admired him the most, who seemed to have lived with him, and who would rather have erred with him, than have been in the right with others, all which are Tully's own professions, knew him better than St. Austin or any modern pedant.

* De Divin. l. i.

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XXXIII.

These first and crude reflections may be sufficient to show that the heathen philosophers were not unable to reform mankind, for the reasons given by Dr. Clarke, but for reasons of a very different kind. I might even have saved myself the trouble perhaps of descending into so many particulars; since it would have been not only an answer "ad hominem," but a full answer to all that can be urged in favor of the same hypothesis, to have asked, whether the reformation, which heathen philosophers could not bring about effectually, has been effected under the Jewish and Christian dispensations? Under these, all the knowledge, and all the means, which are assumed to be necessary, and to have been deficient in the state of paganism, as well as some means really wanting to the philosophers, were amply supplied.

Consider Judaism as a religion given by God himself, in the most ostensible manner, to a people whom he chose to be his peculiar people, whom he separated from the rest of mankind, and with whom he made a solemn covenant. Consider the whole series of miracles, that were wrought to convince, to persuade, to assist and defend, to reward and to punish this people occasionally. Add to all this, that God exercised kingly power amongst them for a time, and that the Shecinah, or his divine presence over the mercy-seat, continued amongst them till the destruction of their first temple. Consider this, and then consider that their history is little else than a relation of their rebelling and repenting, of their proneness to one, and of the extreme difficulty with which they were drawn, even by supernatural means, to the other. Consider that these rebellions were not those of particular men, surprised and hurried into disobedience by their passions, but national deliberate violations of the law, and defiances of the Supreme Being. Is it possible that any one, who believes the history of the Bible true, should believe, after he has read it, that the want of a divine authority, and of a principle higher than reason, hindered the heathen philosophers from reforming the world effectually; that they would have succeeded, if they had really had them, as they sometimes pretended to them: and that, for this reason, which they were sagacious enough to discover, they desired and expected a revelation? Surely it is impossible.

The Jews had not such continual and immediate communications with God by their high priest and their prophets, after their return from the Babylonian captivity, as before it, neither were

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they eye-witnesses of such frequent manifestations of his glory and power, as their fathers had been: and yet what a reformation, in point of religion, was wrought among them after the re-establishment of their church and state? How much more zealously and steadily were they attached to their law? This difference was owing, no doubt, to the institution of synagogues in every place where a congregation of ten persons could be assembled, and to other improvements of their ecclesiastical discipline and worship, which had a wonderful effect on the spirit of the people, raised it to enthusiasm, but preserved it orthodox. Socrates and Plato then, to quote no others of the heathen philosophers, might have had the same success, in reforming the manners of men, and in restoring the purity of natural religion at Athens, without any divine mission, that Esdras and Nehemias had at Jerusalem in reviving and improving more effectually the ceremonies and observances of Judaism, by means which experience and good policy suggested to them, if the two Greeks had been, as the two Jews were, the legislators and second founders of their commonwealth.

There is so little pretence to draw the shadow of an argument, from the ineffectual endeavors of the heathen philosophers to reform the world, that the world has not been effectually reformed, nor any one nation in it, even by the promulgation of the gospel, even where Christianity has flourished most in speculation and external devotion. The Son of God, God himself, came upon earth, was born of a woman, lived among men, preached a new covenant, wrought miracles, sent his disciples to all nations, who established his church among them. What has happened? This church has been so far from reforming mankind, that it stood in need of being itself reformed as soon as it was established. The gates of hell have not yet prevailed against it, and we are to believe that they never will. But the gates of hell have shook it extremely in all ages, and the prince of hell has made from the first most terrible incursions within the pale of it. Much zeal has been expressed about articles of faith, much regard has been paid to the outward service of God; and wealth, and power, and pomp, and dignity have been lavishly bestowed on an order of men, who affect to be thought successors to the apostles, and whose institution is avowedly directed to reform the manners of men as well as preserve the purity of faith. Every defect, except that of not living up to their doctrines, which is supposed to have rendered the preachers of natural religion incapable of reforming the world, has been supplied in the preachers of revealed religion. The doctrines of these men have been certainly enforced by a divine authority: and they have been assisted by a higher principle than philosophy

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and bare reason. They had anciently all the advantages of opposition and persecution. They have enjoyed ever since, and during a course of fourteen centuries, all those of support and of favor from civil government and of blind submission from the people. With all these advantages they have not wrought a more effectual reformation. Morality has not been better taught by them, nor better practised under their influence. On the contrary, having united in themselves the two characters of philosophers and priests, they have often sacrificed the former to the latter, not for the sake of revealed religion, which is founded on natural, and can require no such sacrifice, but, like the priests of paganism, for the sake of their craft.

Examples will be brought, I know, in opposition to what is here advanced. Examples of a religious zeal, which prevailed among all the primitive Christians, to such a degree, that though some of them declined, many of them courted, martyrdom; examples of particular men who have deserved a sort of apotheosis for the purity of their doctrines and the sanctity of their lives; and examples on the other hand of pagan ferocity and cruelty, contrasted with Christian moderation and charity. It would not be hard, but it would be a long and invidious task, to show, in a variety of instances, how partially these examples are produced, and these comparisons are made. Let us be content with a few general reflections.

That a religious and enthusiastical zeal animated many of the primitive Christians, both the orthodox and the heretics, is most certain. But to make the example prove what it is designed to prove, this zeal should have been singular, a peculiar effect of Christian revelation; whereas nothing is, nor has been ever more common. The zeal of the Jews, whilst they lived in the midst of revelations and miracles, was not comparable to that which they showed when they had nothing but the foolish comments of their Mishnical doctors, instead of one, and enthusiastical visions and superstitious signs instead of the other. We shall find the same if we go for examples to many of the pagan nations. We shall find not only particular men, but whole bodies of men, among them, as well as among Christians, ready to devote themselves to death, not only for their absurd religions, but for their attachment to a party, or to the most whimsical point of imaginary honor. It is not much to that of revelation, therefore, to ascribe to it what may be the effect of imposture and error: and enthusiasm is no more a proof of true religion, than martyrdom is of a good cause.

The examples of men, reputed saints for the purity of their doctrine, and the holy austerity of their lives, will avail as little to show that the Christian revelation reformed the world, any

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more than the endeavors of heathen philosophers. Their doctrines, the doctrines of these saints I mean, were such as related either to the metaphysical speculations of theology, and to the practice of ceremonies and rites established for outward worship and ecclesiastical discipline, or to moral obligations and the duties of natural religion. About the first, and second, it must be confessed that the pastors of the church were in those days as they are in ours, extremely intent. But the disputes that arose among them, on all such occasions, and the scandal with which they were carried on by all sides, leave it very doubtful to whom this purity is to be ascribed, and much more probable that it was to be ascribed to none. It seems that no side had a good claim to it, in many cases, whilst the disputes lasted. When they were determined by councils, however this determination was procured, a standard of purity was assumed to be fixed; and authority did what neither reason nor revelation could do, it ascertained orthodoxy in belief and practice, till new disputes arose, or till old ones were revived. These doctrines and these rites have been so far from reforming the world, that they have promoted, by the disputes raised about them, more hatred, malice and uncharitableness, than ever was in it before. They have diminished the flames neither of ambition nor avarice. They have added fresh fuel to them, and have kindled new flames of their own. In short, the examples of these saints, with respect to these doctrines, will never prove the utility of revelation: and with respect to those that regard moral obligations, and the duties of natural religion, they either neglected them, or taught them more imperfectly than several of the heathen philosophers. When I say that they neglected them, this I mean. The theology contained in the gospel lies in a very narrow compass. It is marvellous indeed, but it is plain, and it is employed throughout, to enforce natural religion. This seems to be the end, and revealed religion the means, both which it would have been for the honor of Christianity and for the good of mankind to have left so. But the saints, that have been quoted, took another course from the first. Instead of making theology, and the external duties of religion, serve as means, they insisted on them as if knowledge in metaphysics, ceremony and ecclesiastical dominion, had been the principal ends of revelation. They insisted on them so constantly and so voluminously, that natural religion held but the second place in their system, and that righteousness of faith became much more important than righteousness of works. On this account we may say that they neglected, in some sort, the doctrines of natural religion: they practised them ill, and they could scarce fail to teach them both imperfectly and erroneously; since they derived them *à priori*, from principles of their own

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theology, and from the ideas they framed of the divine attributes, instead of deriving them *à posteriori* from the constitution of the human system. To this we must ascribe the wild allegories with which they perplexed the plainest dictates of reason, the affected refinements, which are impracticable in any national society, and the immoral doctrines which ought to have been banished, with the saints who taught them, out of all societies. The charge, I bring, is not that of passion or prejudice, no, nor of ignorance. I am able to justify it in all its parts, by some instances: and if you would see it made good by more, and by more learned authorities, consult such writers as Barbeyrac, who was provoked by a saucy monk, to publish his book, "La Moralité des Peres." Consult other critics, of whom they are many. Nay, consult the authors who deny his charge: and I will appeal to your judgment on what you can find even in them, provided you weigh the facts in the balance of common sense, and pay no regard to their judgments.

Thus much for purity of doctrine. Much less needs to be said about holiness and austerity of life. The histories of saints have been in all religions, even more than those of any other eminent persons, little better than panegyrical romances. The reason of which is obvious enough. No man, for instance, is so silly, I presume, at this time, unless he be a Rosycrucian, as to give any more credit to the biographers of the Egyptian hermits Anthony and Paul, than to those of Pythagoras and Appollonius of Thyana. All their relations are stuffed alike with the most evident falsehoods, the most puerile absurdities, and the grossest superstitions; for many of these were common to pagans, Jews and Christians; and yet the first of the biographers, I mention, who yield in none of these respects to Porphyry, Jamblichus, Philostratus, or any other compiler of lying legends, were famous saints, Athanasius and Jerom. But further, if we allow the sanctity and austerity of some particular men, or of some particular orders of men, to have been, and to be, as great as they are represented, this will be far from proving the reformation of the world by Christianity. There were anciently among the heathens, Chaldeans, Gymnosophists and others, and there are now, both among them and the Mahometans, particular men, and orders of men, of great sanctity of life, nay of greater than any amongst Christians; if sanctity be to be measured, as they who would make the objection, I answer, measure it by austerity. It is unnecessary to quote the instances, which are to be found in all our books of travels. Even Simeon Stylites, who stood fasting and praying on the top of a column so many years together, has been outdone by multitudes. What now can be said? If these examples are not sufficient to prove that

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heathen philosophers and Mahometan doctors have reformed the world, will examples of the same, or of an inferior kind, prove that Christianity has?

It will not be said, I think, that luxury and debauchery have been restrained by Christianity. It was a proverbial saying, "Daphnicis moribus vivere:" and Cassius, if I remember right, would not suffer his army to encamp at Antioch, lest his soldiers should be corrupted by the manners of the place. But where is the court or city, in which Christianity is professed, to which this phrase might not be applied? I know of none, nor is there any good reason to believe there was any such anciently, neither that of Constantine, whatever his panegyrist advances, nor that of Charlemagne, though your church has thought fit for other reasons to make saints of both these princes. Upon this, therefore, divines will be ashamed to insist, or may be easily made so; since it is not difficult to show them, that the men of their own order, who did not mend their manners afterwards, were famous even in the fourth century for following those of Daphne. But it will be sounded high that the patience, moderation and charity which Christianity inspires, softened the turbulent, fierce and cruel temper of paganism, and wrought, by doing this, a wonderful reformation in the world. You must remember that this fact has been asserted to be undeniable, and yet it is false: the very contrary is true. Constantine did, I believe, expect that the establishment of the Christian religion in the empire would have this effect. But his expectation proved vain; and I might appeal to the ecclesiastical and civil history of the last fourteen hundred years, that is, from his days to ours, to vouch for me. The whole tenor of them proves that revolts against government, and disorders of every kind, have been at least as frequent in the Christian world as in the pagan. There were never more, nor more unjust, nor more cruel wars than Christians have waged, and the persecutions and massacres, that may be reproached to them are such, in all circumstances of inhumanity, as can be reproached to no other people except the Jews. That any part of these evils ought to be ascribed to gospel Christianity, I neither say nor believe. They cannot be reconciled to the principles of it. But this I say, and believe, that the Christian revelation has not effectually reformed the world. There never was in itself a more risible, nor in its consequences a more lamentable absurdity imposed on mankind than this, that a certain order of men should be instituted, not only to preside in the exercises of public worship, and to exhort others to the practice of their known duties, but to think for the rest, and to dictate opinions to them on matters of nice speculation concerning which they themselves were never

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agreed, and which have no immediate connection with these known duties. This absurdity, however, has prevailed in the Christian as in other religions of positive institution; and in this, as in them, the spirit of the clergy has become the spirit of the religion. They, who should have preached concord, have preached discord; and they, who should have promoted peace, have animated to war. They have given continual pretence to ferocity and cruelty; they have often irritated them above their usual excesses; and the profane application of a scrap* of the gospel has served to deluge whole nations in blood. A private opinion, however true, that was not exactly conformable to an ecclesiastical decision, was termed heresy; and against such heresy, as against the greatest of crimes, the passions of men were inflamed under the name of zeal.

Though I avoid to descend into particulars, let me just compare natural ferocity and cruelty with religious, by mentioning one example of the former, and two of the latter. The barbarous people, who broke into the Roman empire, had no motives but those of plundering wealthy provinces, and settling in better climates. Religion was so far from being a motive to these enterprises, that they embraced generally that of the nations they conquered. They were guilty, no doubt, of great violence and cruelty; but when you have read the most exaggerated accounts of their proceedings, read those which are contained in the Bible, of the invasion of Palestine, and those which Spanish authors themselves give of the invasion of America. These events that happened at an immense distance of time, and were brought about under very different economies of religion and policy, are, therefore, the more proper to show how religion may furnish a pretence to natural ferocity and cruelty, as well as aggravate both, and that it has always done so either by its own spirit, as in the case of Judaism, or by that of its teachers, as in the case of Christianity. When the Israelites marched to the conquest of Canaan, the ark and the priests marched before them. An ancient promise, which God made to Abraham, when he made that covenant with him which was the foundation of their religion, was the foundation of the justice of this expedition, and the immediate commands of God were urged to authorise such extirpations of people, as no other history can parallel, as it is impossible to read without horror, as were unnecessary to give them a secure possession of the country, and as neither this reason, nor any other, could excuse. When the Spaniards sailed to the conquest of America, silver and gold were their objects,

* Compel them to come in.

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but the propagation of the gospel was their pretence. That wretch, Pope Alexander the Sixth, made them a donation of an entire hemisphere: and priests and monks were sent, that they might add the fury of bigotry to that of avarice.

I might rest the matter here, having said enough to show how false and trifling the argument is which Clarke endeavors to draw from an incapacity in the heathen philosophers, both for want of knowledge, which was not, and for want of other means, which was their case, to reform mankind, and from the assumed sufficiency of revelation alone to produce this effect. But I choose to wind up the whole, by desiring you to retrace, in your mind, the progress made in sociability, civility, and every moral virtue, in the heathen republics of Greece and Rome, before and since the Christian revelation. Authors may declaim as much as they please, to aggravate particular vices, and to take off from the lustre of particular virtues; they will persuade no man, who reads and judges for himself, that the practice of piety and virtue has increased among the Greeks, from the time of Constantine downwards, under the influence of Christian pastors, as it did, under the influence of heathen philosophers and legislators; from the time when Thucydides represents them like lawless savages, who went pirating and ravishing about, to the days when Athens and Sparta flourished. As little will the same authors persuade that the distance in virtue between that rout of shepherds and outlaws who formed a state under Romulus, and the citizens of Rome in the best ages of that commonwealth, was not vastly greater than any improvement of the same kind, that was made among them, from the time that Rome became Christian.

It appears now to be true, in fact, that neither reason nor revelation, neither heathen nor Christian philosophers, neither human nor divine laws, have been able to reform the manners of men effectually; may we not, nay must we not conclude that such a reformation is inconsistent with the original constitution of the human system? Must we not conclude that appetites, passions, and the immediate objects of pleasure, will be always of greater force to determine men than reason, and the more remote object as well as complicated notion of happiness? Such is the imperfect state in which we are placed; a state wherein the vice and virtue of our moral, like the good and evil of our physical world, prevail in their turns, and are often, at the best, and in the most favorable circumstances, but equally balanced on the whole. Why there is such a state as this, and how to reconcile it to the ideas of holiness and goodness, let those men inquire who say that God appeals to man, who take him at his word, and presume to judge him accordingly. But let you and I pronounce, that since there is such a state as this in the universal

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system, it was fit and right that there should be such a state. On this head we may, we ought to be dogmatical.

XXXIV.

What has been here laid down is so far from making natural or revealed religion, or any means that tend to the reformation of mankind, unnecessary, that it makes them all more necessary. Since our state is so imperfect, since it is so hard to keep the virtues that are intimately connected with the happiness, and the vices that are intimately connected with the misery of mankind, even on a balance, nothing should be neglected that may give the advantage to the former, by enforcing moral obligations and all the doctrines of natural religion. As nothing should be neglected, so nothing may seem in speculation so proper to this purpose as a true revelation, or a revelation believed to be true: and if experience has not confirmed speculation in the case of a revelation we believe to be true, if Christianity, which has enforced natural religion in some respects, has corrupted it in others, the maxim may still remain unshaken. The natural, the genuine effect of the gospel has been defeated and perverted, and much has been done toward lessening the authority of it, by the manner in which it has been propagated.

If it had been propagated with the same simplicity and plainness, with which it was taught originally, by the author of it, natural religion would have been enforced, and could not have been corrupted by Christianity; but a voluminous and intricate system of artificial theology was grafted on it, both which observations have been made already, and must be often repeated for the honor of the gospel. This system was framed soon by habits contracted in the schools of Judaism and Paganism. In the first, their second or oral law, that is, their traditions were taught: and what this science was may be seen in the collection of them made a century and an half after Christ, by one of their Rabbins;* the small obligation of being acquainted with which we ignorant persons owe to the labors of several great scholars. What the science taught in the others was we know from the remains of Pythagorean doctrines, and from the writings of Plato, that are come down to us, and that were in great vogue among the first teachers of Christianity. Well might these men grow credulous in one, fantastical in the other, and superstitious in both. Such were they whom we call very properly fathers of the church, since they begot the discipline, and much the

* Judah Hakkadosh, or the holy.

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greatest part of the doctrines of it. Easily imposed upon, and prone to impose, like the Jews, fond of mystery and of principles of knowledge laid beyond the bounds of all knowledge, like Pythagoric and Platonic metaphysicians, it is no wonder that they ran into theological obscurity with the light of the gospel shining before them. Accustomed to declaim rather than reason, and to employ figurative style even on subjects that require the most exact determination of ideas and precision of terms, like the rhetors of Greece and Rome, accustomed to advance intrepidly whatever served to the present purpose, without any regard to truth, like the sophists of those ages, which practice St. Jerom* defended and imputed to St. Peter and St. Paul, it is no wonder that they opposed sometimes error to error, and very often jargon to jargon.

Such science as this, and such habits as these, produced infinite absurdities, grounded on precarious tradition and false reasoning, with which I shall meddle in this place no further than the subject before me requires. To seek the will of God, and the duty of man, in the constitution of the world, and of the human nature, wherein they are most evidently revealed, would have been deemed too low a manner of philosophising for those men to take, who pretended to gifts of the spirit, whilst that opinion was rife amongst the first Christians; and when it was so no longer, their successors had a recourse that served them almost as well. They sought the will of God, and the duty of man, in their own comments and paraphrases of Scripture, in the abstract reason of things, and in the eternal ideas, where Socrates and Plato had sent men to find whatever is unknown on earth, as Ariosto sends them to the moon to find whatever is lost on earth. They deduced moral obligations from the divine attributes, of which they might think themselves more competent judges than others, because they thought themselves better informed by the Jews of his manner of government, and by Christian tradition, if I dare to say so, of his private life and conversation.

These methods of framing and defending a system of religion were very convenient. They were in the hands of the fathers, what the cabbala was in those of the rabbins. If they did not make an oral, they made a second law, necessary like the other in pretence to the perfection and to the intelligence of the first; and that gathered as it rolled on, till it became as voluminous, and, by dint of explanation and commentary, as abstruse. Among other recommendations, insisted on by Clarke, of these methods of reasoning, from the divine attributes, and the eternal

* Vid. Comm. in Ep. ad Gal. c. 2.

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reason of things, to the moral obligations, under which we were laid by the will of God, whereof I speak particularly here, and to the designs of God in creating the world and man, as well as to the conduct of his Providence, in the government of the whole, whereof I shall speak hereafter, the universality of them is one. Now it is this very universality which aggravates the presumption of mankind, which sets the danger of these methods of reasoning in a stronger light, and which proves invincibly against him, that they are far from being what he asserts they are, the best, clearest and certainest that philosophy affords. When we deduce the will of God, and the duty of man, from the constitution of the world, and of the human nature, we deduce them from real knowledge; and we may have the certainty of this knowledge, through all the parts of natural religion, if we never lose sight of the first principles of it. That men lose this certainty, both philosophers and others, both they who reason *à priori* and sometimes they who reason *à posteriori*, is true. The vast variety of opinions concerning the morality and immorality of actions, and the number of contradictory laws that have been all made with the same design to promote the practice of natural religion, show it to be so. But the difference lies here. Though neither of these methods can secure men absolutely from error in forming general maxims, and much less in the particular applications even of such of these as are true, yet they have in one case a sure criterion, and in the other none at all. The reasoner *à posteriori*, may at all times go back to those principles of knowledge from which he set out, and which he will find always the same, retrace his own reasonings, and rectify his mistakes. But whither shall the reasoner *à priori* go? Shall he go back to the abstract reason of things, and to the moral attributes of the Deity, from which he set out? But in them, as often as he has recourse to them, he will find no such criterion. The notions of other men will differ from his, and the first principles of his boasted knowledge, for want of such a criterion, will be founded in probability at best. It required no such metaphysical apparatus, as Clarke employs somewhat tediously, to prove that all perfections natural and moral must be attributes of the self-existent, all-perfect author of all being; but he does not prove what he asserts, and on the proof of which his whole argument turns, that these attributes are the same in God, as they are in our ideas.* He says indeed that he has proved it: and if we do not accept his proofs he leaves us to recur to downright atheism; nay, he threatens to force us into it. Happily he has not been able to do the mischief he meditated. Many a

* Evid. p. 33, 34, et alibi.

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man believes in God, who does not believe in him. Many a man discerns, in their fullest light, the evidences of natural religion, and gives their due weight to those of revealed religion, without taking assumptions for demonstrations, and a chain of the former, which have an imaginary connection only, for a chain of the latter rising out of one another, and closely connected together.

I have enlarged the rather on this head, because the example of this modern divine is extremely proper to give us an image of the ancient divines who raised the theological system. Few of them reasoned so well even as he, but they set the manner which he and the rest of their successors have followed; a manner which may serve, as it did formerly, and as it does still, in some degree, to realise, in appearance, the whimsies of every overheated brain, and to maintain indeterminable disputes; a manner which, proving almost every thing, proves almost nothing; and which, if it can be of any use, can be so only under the control of the other method. It can be only of subordinate use. It may illustrate. It never can, it never did decide; and the disputes it raised, in the early ages of Christianity, may be well called indeterminable, since they are not yet determined. I have good reason to say, though I cannot say it on my own knowledge, that some of them were not determined in Clarke's own mind, though he has pronounced dogmatically about them in his writings.

When I say that the method of reasoning *à priori*, from the eternal reason of things, and from the divine attributes, may be of some subordinate use, under the control of the other; I mean that although our moral obligations arise from our moral system, that is, from the works of God, and the additional motives to observe them from the word of God alone, yet arguments deduced in this method, and expressly authorised by neither, may serve to warm the imagination, to move the affections, and by a sort of pious fraud to enforce natural religion. A lively declamation, unsupported by reason, and even by gospel revelation, concerning the whole scheme, order, and state of things, from the original design of God in the creation of man to his fall, and from thence to his redemption, a pathetical exhortation to imitate God, in the exercise of his glorious attributes, in these perfections which are the foundation of his own unchangeable happiness, in which we are able to imitate him, and in which he desires that we should imitate him, because he has an infinitely tenderer and heartier concern for us, than any earthly father has for his posterity, to speak the language of Dr. Clarke; such declamations and such exhortations, I say, may have a great and a good effect, especially when they flow from an eloquent

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mouth, and from the pulpit. The man, who is convinced by his reflections on human nature, and the nature of society, for instance, that benevolence, and justice, and truth are the duties of natural religion, on the practice of which his happiness, and that of his whole kind depend, will not be further convinced, but he may be more moved, and his passions may be wrought up to second his judgment.

If the fathers of the church, and modern divines, had made no other use of this method of reasoning than to strengthen a sense of our moral obligations, and to raise in the minds of men a greater veneration for the Scriptures, after they had proved the authenticity of them by external proofs, it had been well both for natural and revealed religion. But they have made a very different use of it. They have shook the former down to its very foundation, and, under pretence of explaining and defending the other, they have laid it more open to the attacks of unbelievers. Reason is sober and modest. She never affects to lead men beyond her bounds, but delivers them over to revelation. There is, and there needs must be, something marvellous in revelation. This marvellous dazzles and often blinds; so that they who pursue it too far slide easily into the whimsies of their own imaginations. Truth warms their brains; error that passes for it turns them. Thus Christianity became fanaticism, even in the first professors of it. Thus artificial theology grew up as fast as men began to teach the doctrine of Christ, like a revelation made so obscurely and imperfectly, that they who were to publish it were to explain it, and not only to explain it, but to supply the deficiencies of it; and some will be apt to think that the first of these men was Paul. Divines would be furious to hear such language held as I hold to you. But they would be under great difficulties to evade the charge, and, therefore, the more furious; since I could easily produce passages out of the most renowned of the fathers, and out of their own writings, as extravagant as any in the Talmud, as absurd as any in the Koran, and quite fit to hold their places in one of Borri's letters; and since the whole ecclesiastical history is an history of the intolerance and violence of Christians to one another, on such points as these, from the time they had it in their power to be intolerant and to persecute. You will not expect a bead-roll of these doctrines and disputes. It will be sufficient to show how they had the effects that have been mentioned, both in natural and revealed religion.

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XXXV.

Clarke observes that there is now no such thing as a consistent scheme of theism. A complete one, such a one as presumes to account for the whole order and state of things relatively to God and man, I believe there is not. But how does the learned writer make out his proposition? That of the best heathen philosophers, which alone was such, ceases now to be so, he says, after the appearance of revelation; because it directly conducts men to the belief of Christianity. If he intends the Socratical and Platonic scheme, and he can intend no other, what he advances is untrue; unless it be true that a scheme which appears sometimes dogmatical and sometimes sceptical, that favors monotheism and polytheism in the same breath, as it were, may be consistent. If this scheme led to Christianity in any sort, as I think it did, this was due not to the consistency, but to the inconsistency of it. Several of its doctrines were adopted into articles of faith by Christianity. Others were rejected. It happened accordingly. This adoption drew several of these philosophers into Christianity: and this rejection made several averse to it. Justin died to maintain it. Porphyry would have died to oppose it. That Platonism was a consistent scheme, or that it conducted men directly to Christianity, is not true therefore. But it is very true, that the method of reasoning *à priori* from heaven, if I may say so, that we do not know, to earth instead of reasoning from earth that we do know, to heaven, was introduced into Christianity with doctrines which the same method had broached in paganism; that this method continued to be in common that of those who embraced the Christian profession, and of those who opposed it; and that it propagated fanaticism alike in both, as every man who compares, for instance, St. Austin and Plotinus together with indifference, which every man should do in such a case, must confess.

Christian fanaticism was more catching, and in that respect more dangerous than the other. Some of the heathen saints pretended to ravishments, to extasies, to occasional unions with the supreme intelligence, and to revelation. But those of Christianity had besides all these advantages, the word of God himself to produce against unbelievers, and they hauled this word so well to their purposes (the expression is St. Jerom's*) that every side appealed to it in the disputes they had with one another. The consequence was, that every side damned all the rest, and

* Trahere Scripturas.

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which was really worse, persecuted them in this world. The heathens exercised great violence against one another in their quarrels about their secular interests; but religion neither caused nor fomented them: whereas the quarrels of this kind were the most frequent and the most inveterate among Christians. They broke not only the bonds of alliance between nations, but those of kindred in families, and those of friendship where it was the most intimate. Such quarrels turned frequently on metaphysical speculations which no side understood, or on rites and ceremonies of no importance to religion. These were the objects that engrossed, with those of ecclesiastical power and wealth, the whole attention of the church, and, under her influence, almost the whole attention of the state as it appears by the behavior of the Roman emperors after Constantine, some of whom seemed to have no other concern in the greatest distress of that empire, and in the very moment of its fall. Nay, there is mention made of one who had a scruple of conscience, about the time he spent in secular affairs, and the government of his people. Thus reformation of manners was the concern of nobody: and whilst the utmost dissolution of them was practised and indulged by the clergy, men were persecuted, at their instigation, for the least supposed error in forms of speech, or in forms of worship; and injustice and murder were made duties of religion on this account. Is there not sufficient reason now to assert, that natural religion has been corrupted, and shook to the foundations of it, by artificial theology?

Sociability is the great instinct, and benevolence the great law, of human nature, which no other law can repeal, or alter: and yet when men have accustomed themselves to think of the Supreme Being, as of an human legislator and governor, and to ascribe to the all-perfect Being the same ideas, the same sentiments, affections, and passions, that they perceive in themselves; they may easily come to imagine, or to make others imagine him as intent to preserve the outward forms of his court, as the most essential laws of his government; and themselves as much bound at least to be good courtiers as good subjects. They may think themselves surest to please in the first of these characters. On a confidence in the merit of it, they may not only neglect the duties of the other, but they may sacrifice, to a false notion of honoring the prince, the fundamental laws, and the constitution of his government. They may think, or they may represent themselves to be his favorites, and they may treat even his best subjects as rebels, by virtue of laws which his ministers make, and which he is supposed to authorise.

This allusion to the abuses of civil government, in the kingdoms of earthly monarchs, gives a true image of those which

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have always prevailed in the spiritual kingdom of Christ, to the subversion of its original constitution: and with this allusion I shall finish this head.

XXXVI.

But I have undertaken to show further, that artificial theology, which has shaken the foundations of natural religion, has laid revealed religion much more open to the attacks of unbelievers, by explanations and defences, than it would have been, if it had been left to stand without them on the proper proofs of this fact singly, it is a divine revelation. Now to illustrate this point, let us suppose a theist objecting to some modest reasoner *à posteriori*, who is firmly persuaded of the authenticity of the Scriptures, that they contain many things repugnant to the justice and goodness of God, and unworthy of his majesty, his wisdom and power. The believer might reply, that he knows the difference between knowledge produced by the certainty of demonstration, and that assurance which the highest degree of probability may produce; that an assurance founded on any less degree of probability would not be sufficient in this case; but that assurance founded on probability is the utmost which can be had in all cases of this kind, and, therefore, that he thinks himself obliged to receive these books for the word of God, though he cannot reconcile every thing that they contain to his ideas of the attributes of an infinite all-perfect Being. He might add, that he sees and feels many things in the constitution of the physical and moral world, and in the conduct of Providence, which it is not easy to reconcile to the same attributes; and yet that he knows, with all the certainty of demonstration, that the former are the works, and the latter the act of God. He might add, that revelation may be necessary to illuminate reason in matters of religion, because there is a more immediate correspondence in matters of religion between God and man; but that reason cannot explain revelation, nor much less to enforce it; that nothing less than another revelation can do either, and that in the mean time it is the duty of man to submit to believe what he does, and to adore what he does not, understand. This the reasoner *à posteriori* might reply with great plausibility at least. But the reasoner *à priori* could have no right to use the same language. A theist would retort his own doctrine against him in this manner. "You argue, and you pretend to demonstrate, on your ideas of justice and goodness as well as of wisdom and power, and by the reason of things, even when your arguments and your supposed demonstrations conclude against the consti-

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tution and government of the world, which you and I both acknowledge to be from God. With what face then can you object to me, that I reason upon the same ideas, and by the same rule, concerning this book which you acknowledge, and I do not, to be the word of God? Must I respect probability more than you respect certainty, and a probability which is either not established, or is established by halves? It is not established, if the book contains any thing which implies an absolute contradiction with any conceivable perfection even of the human nature. It is established by halves, whatever external proofs you may bring, unless you can show that the things contained in it, which seem repugnant to all our ideas of a perfect nature, are really consistent with them: which must be shown not by a precarious begging of the question, but by direct and evident proofs." What now must the reasoner *à priori* do? He must give up the cause to the theist, or he must submit to the task which the reasoner *à posteriori* evaded, by crying out from the first "O altitudo!" and by declining to examine any objections to matters contained in the Scriptures: in short, he puts himself under a necessity of showing,* that all these matters are exactly consonant to the dictates of sound reason, or the unprejudiced light of nature, and most wisely perfective of it;† and that all the doctrines .... necessary to salvation, or closely connected with such as are so, are apparently most agreeable to reason, though not discoverable by it.

This task has been undertaken accordingly by every divine, sanguinely and dogmatically by most, weakly by all of them. One of your acquaintance and mine* has dintinguished himself, in all these respects, by writing on the subject, as he would have preached to an Irish congregation. But that such a man as Clarke should write upon it at all, and have nothing better to say than what he has said, may serve to show how these men are led, by their manner of reasoning, and by their artificial theology, to disarm Christianity of her best defence, by taking her out of the stronghold of revelation, and by trusting to those feeble entrenchments, which they are able to cast up; for even those, which Clarke cast up, are feeble beyond belief. I am not answering his book, and shall, therefore, do no more than make a transient mention of some particulars: but I am willing to rest the truth of what I have advanced, even on this transient mention.

The doctor is to prove it agreeable to sound unprejudiced reason, to believe that the Supreme Being did generate a divine

* Evid. p. 239. † Ibid. p. 244. * Dr. Delany.

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person or emanation from himself, and he proves it by asserting, that this doctrine contains no manner of absurdity nor contradiction in it. This was more easily asserted than proved, some persons would say. But besides, is it agreeable to reason to believe a proposition true, merely because it does not manifestly imply contradiction? Is every thing, that is possible, probable: or is it reasonable to believe, on the probability that a revelation is a true revelation, any thing that may be possibly not inconsistent with the perfections of the divine nature, but that seems to be so in probable opinion? It is said, that the wisest and most learned of the ancient philosophers received and taught some doctrines—as difficult to comprehend, as any thing in this article of the Christian faith, and that these men would not have made any objection to it on this account. Agreed. How then does the argument stand? Reduce it to its just value, and it stands thus. The heathen philosophers taught many doctrines as incomprehensible as this, without any pretence of a divine authority; and their own wild hypotheses would have conducted them readily to receive this, on the authority of a revelation: it is, therefore, agreeable to sound unprejudiced reason that we, who know how fantastical their whole theology was, should follow the example which it is assumed they would have set us, and believe without any of their prejudices, what they might have been induced, by these very prejudices to believe. This doctrine of the logos or nous was taught in some of the Egyptian, and other schools of eastern divinity; and we are not to wonder if Plato, who had it from them, spoke obscurely, or understood little concerning it, since it is not discoverable by bare reason. But I think that Plato would not have been more willing than Arius, or Clarke himself to subscribe to the Athanasian creed. He would have assented perhaps, as much as he assented in other cases, to a coevality of the Son with the Father, as the eternal effect of an eternal cause. But he would not have assented to their coequality. He assumed that the Son and the Spirit are distinct subordinate beings, and no more coequal with the one Supreme Being, in the order of natnre, than the world was thought to be by Aristotle, and the philosophers, who maintained the eternity of it.

Archbishop Tillotson's challenge to the Socinians it is not to my purpose to examine; and I need say nothing of the Holy Spirit, since all that Clarke says is, that the same which is said of the second may be understood very agreeably to right reason and with little variation of the third.

That the account the Bible gives of a paradisiacal state, of the loss of it by sin, and of the consequences of this loss, are exactly

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consonant to the dictates of sound reason,* or the unprejudiced light of nature, and most wisely perfective of it (for thus far his undertaking goes) it behoved him to make out very clearly; because if the redemption be, as he owns it is,† the main and fundamental article of the Christian faith, sure I am, that the account of the fall of man is the foundation of this fundamental article. He should have labored this point the rather, since it is, in all its circumstances, absolutely irreconcilable to every idea we can frame of wisdom, justice and goodness, to say nothing of the dignity of the Supreme Being, who is introduced so familiarly, and employed so indecently, in taking the cool air, in making coats of skins, to serve instead of aprons of fig leaves which Adam and Eve had sewed together, and not only in cursing the serpent, and them, and their whole posterity, and the world itself for their sakes, but in joking most cruelly on them; for the twenty-second verse of the third chapter of Genesis is allowed to be a holy irony or sarcasm by that learned divine, Matthew Poole. Instead of proving any part of this to be agreeable to sound reason, and the unprejudiced light of nature, Clarke passes over the whole, as very reasonable and credible in itself, which it appears to be, he says, not only from the abstract consideration of the nature of the thing,‡ but also from the general opinion of the heathens, that the original state of man was innocent and simple, till God, for the sins of men, changed this happy constitution of things. In the name of God, is this to prove? Do men, who prove no better, deserve an answer, how much reputation soever they may have acquired? Their adversaries deny, and have attempted to show, that this account of the fall of man is unreasonable, and incredible, in every consideration, abstract, or particular. This champion in demonstration says, it is very reasonable and credible from the abstract consideration of the thing. He says no more. He begs the question, therefore, shamefully, on the very point in dispute, and which he undertook to maintain. The heathen, the most ancient and learned of them, are again brought in to no purpose whatever; since if they had all agreed, in some general and obscure tradition of this sort, it would avail little, as to the reasonableness and credibility of this change in the constitution of things, and nothing as to the particular circumstances, which are made the angular stones of the whole fabric of Christianity. One cannot consider the use which Clarke makes, so frequently, and to so little purpose, of the heathen philosophers without laughing, as Calanus, the doctor's voucher on this occasion, laughed at the dress of Onesicritus, when he bid him strip and lie down naked on the stones by him.§

* Evid. p. 239. † Ibid. p. 262. ‡ Ibid. p. 255. § Strabo, l. 15.

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The mad gymnosophist had begun, whilst he laughed, to tell the messenger of Alexander, as a sample of his wisdom, how fertile the world was in ancient times, how the fountains ran with milk, with water, with honey, with wine and with oil; how Jupiter had destroyed this constitution of things,* for the iniquity of men, who abused his goodness; and had obliged them to live by their labor; how it had been restored again on their reformation, and what danger there was, now they had relapsed into almost the same iniquity, that the end of all things should be at hand. He would have proceeded, no doubt, in much the same style, if Mandanis, the head of the order, had not imposed silence on him, and, calling Onesicritus to himself from Calanus, had not talked with great decency and good sense, in a manner, and on subjects proper for the Greek to report to his prince. Thus the history of the fall, and all the circumstances of it are proved reasonable and probable.

XXXVII.

Our author takes a little more pains to show, that the doctrine of the redemption of mankind is agreeable to reason. Having assumed, which he calls proving, that the moral attributes of God, and the notions and expectations of some wise men among the heathens, make it reasonable to believe God did make, seventeen hundred years ago, a revelation of his will to mankind, as if mankind stood in more need of a revelation four thousand years after their race began, than at any other period; as if the moral attributes of God were not the same, four thousand years before, when he made the first revelation of his will, in the constitution of nature; and finally, as if the notions and expectations of Socrates and Plato, supposing these philosophers to have had them really, proved any thing more than their desire of more knowledge than God thought proper to give them the means of acquiring; having assumed all this, I say, he proceeds to argue in this manner.† Some sacrifice or expiation for sin was necessary to be appointed, "to show God's irreconcilable hatred to it. Repentance might not be sufficient. God would not be appeased without some punishment and satisfaction; and yet he would accept some other than the destruction of offenders. This appears, in the custom of sacrificing, to have been the universal apprehension of mankind:" and, from this universal apprehension, he concludes, that "the doctrine of the redemption is

* —ob satietatem et luxuriam ad contumeliam se transididerunt.
† Evid. p. 263 et seq.

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plainly agreeable to right reason." Thus are these great masters of reason reduced to propose the most gross abuses for the true dictates of it. Thus are the most absurd notions which superstition ever spread, in contradiction to the law of nature and reason, applied to the proceedings of God with man; made the measure of divine justice by philosophers who determine and define the moral attributes of the deity; and established as foundations of the Christian system, by divines who pretend, and who are hired, to defend it. Notions which directed a principal part of idolatrous worship are sanctified, and the most inhuman rites are rendered the most meritorious; for if it was agreeable to sound reason, to think that God would not be appeased unless some blood was spilled, he who shed that of beasts to expiate sins did well, but he who shed that of his children did better.—He brought the punishment nearer to himself: and the Phenician had the advantage, in this respect, of the Israelite. He erred, whatever he sacrificed, by the misapplication of a true prnciple, when he sacrificed to Moloch. But the Israelite, who did not misapply the principle, would have pursued it more agreeably to sound reason, and the unprejudiced light of nature, if he had sacrificed his son, as Abraham was ready to do, or his daughter like Jephthah. God was pleased to accept of an expiation that cost offenders less to make, under the Mosaical dispensation, as the Scriptures tell us. But the same Scriptures prove evidently, that the reason of the thing goes so far as I carry it; since, under the Christian dispensation, God caused the expiation for sin to be made by the sufferings and death of his own Son; than which nothing can be imagined, as Clarke* assures us, more honorable and worthy of the Supreme Lord and Governor of all things.

We weigh these matters in the balance of human reason, to which the appeal is made, if men who decide can be said to appeal, even though they affirm that God condescends to do so. They are refuted, therefore, if they have not reason, as well as revelation, on their side: and the charge of weakening the cause of the latter, whilst they presume to defend it by the former, is made out against them. Let us proceed, with a due respect for revelation, and with no more than it deserves for their reasoning.

I say then, though we should allow men were in the right to think universally that God exacted some bloody expiation for sin, and that repentance, which the law of nature points out, was not sufficient; yet even this concession would not justify the doctrine of the redemption of mankind at the bar of reason. The heathens thought, that the sacrifice of an ox, or a son, or a daughter, would atone for sins. Therefore, it is plainly agree-

* Ibid. p. 268.

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able to the universal reason of mankind, signified by this universal apprehension, to believe that God sent his only begotten Son, who had not offended him, to be sacrificed by men, who had offended him, that he might expiate their sins, and satisfy his own anger. Surely our ideas of moral attributes will lead us to think, that God would have been satisfied, more agreeably to his mercy and goodness, without any expiation, upon the repentance of the offenders, and more agreeably to his justice with any other expiation rather than with this. The heathen divines were accustomed to think and speak of their gods much after the manner of men. If one of them, therefore, had arisen from the dead, he would have concurred readily with Clarke in the maxim, that the moral attributes are the same in the divine nature, as they are in our ideas. But then, he would have challenged the doctor to produce an example, in the pagan system, of a god sacrificing his son to appease himself, any more than of a god who was himself his own father and his own son. Saturn, he might say, did indeed offer up his son in sacrifice: but he did it to appease Cœlus, not himself.

When our divine is about to establish, "that there is a fitness and unfitness of certain circumstances to certain persons founded in the nature of things, and in the qualifications of persons: he says, that this must be acknowledged by every one who will not affirm that it is equally fit—that an innocent being should be extremely and eternally miserable, as that it should be free from such misery." The proposition is true without dispute, though it is not true that we can always discern this fitness and unfitness. Let us join issue with the learned person here, and add, to strengthen the maxim, that there is the same unfitness, in the case supposed, whether the misery be assumed external, or not. Let us ask now, whether the truth of this maxim, the innocence of the Lamb of God, and the sufferings and ignominious death of Christ, can be reconciled together, and how? The nicest casuist would, I think, be puzzled; but our casuist goes on most dogmatically, and shows no more regard to the dignity than to the innocence of the divine person who died on the cross. He does, indeed, allow that no one can certainly say, that God might not have pardoned sin upon repentance without any sacrifice. But he pronounces this method of doing it, by the death of Christ, to be more wise and fit for several prudential reasons. Read them, they would appear futile and impertinent if applied to human councils: but in their application to the divine councils they become profane and impious. Nay, it would not be hard to show, that this method was more proper to produce a contrary effect, than that which is assigned as a reason for taking it. For instance, the death of Christ, it is said, was proper to discounte-

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nance presumption, and to discourage men from repeating their transgressions. Surely, it would not be hard to show by reason, that the death of Christ might, and by fact, that it has countenanced presumption without discouraging men from repeating their transgressions. But I shall not descend into particulars that are trifling and tedious, and that would render a full answer to them little better. A general reflection, or two, may serve, and are as much as they all deserve.

Though I am far from approving the practice of those who compare so frequently the divine with the human economy and policy, and who build on the last their hypothetical schemes of the first; yet on this occasion, and to frame an argument *ad hominem*, it may be properly done. Let us suppose then, a great prince governing a wicked and rebellious people. He has it in his power to punish, he thinks fit to pardon them. But he orders his only and beloved son to be put to death to expiate their sins, and to satisfy his royal vengeance. Would this proceeding appear to the eye of reason, and in the unprejudiced light of nature, wise, or just, or good? No man dares to say that it would, except he be a divine; for Clarke does in effect say that it would; since he imputes this very proceeding to God, and justifies it not implicitly on the authority of revelation, but explicitly on the authority of reason, which may be applied to man as well as to God, and as a particular instance of the general rule that is, according to him, common to both. Allow me one reflection more.

Clarke acknowledges readily, that human reason could never have discovered such a method as this for the reconciliation of sinners to an offended God. But if reason could not have discovered it, how comes it to pass that reason finds no such difficulty nor inconceivableness in it, as to make a wise man call the truth of it in question? the truth of a well attested revelation, he says. But here he plays the sophist. He is to prove the method agreeable to sound unprejudiced reason, independently of revelation. No matter how it came to be known, is it reasonable, is it agreeable to a fitness, founded in the nature of things, and in the qualifications of persons? That is the point to be considered. To consider it as reasonable relatively to the revelation of it, is not to appeal to unprejudiced, but to prejudiced reason. It is in plain terms to beg the question shamefully. Heathen theology was licentious enough in all conscience. The professors of it gave an extravagant loose to their imaginations, passed all the bounds of probability, and scarce kept within those of conceivable possibility. Thus they came very uear to such a system as this: so near, that there was little more to be added, but this little, they did not think so highly of the human, and so lowly

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of the divine nature, as was necessary to make them add it. Æsculapius came down from heaven, conversed in a visible form with men, and taught them the art of healing diseases.* The passage is cited from Julian by Clarke, in order to show, according to his laudable custom, that there is nothing in the Christian system which we may not believe on grounds of reason; because there is nothing in it more incredible than what the least reasonable men that ever were, wild metaphysicians, heathens, heretics, apostates, have believed. It may be cited more properly to show, what I mean to show by it, how easy and short a transition might have been made by heathen divines, in the rage that possessed them all of framing complete schemes of the whole order and state of things, from a god teaching physic to a god teaching theology. The most ignorant and savage of them, like the Phœnicians and the Carthaginians, who have been already mentioned, for they were all superstitious alike, came a little nearer to the doctrine of redemption. But even they did not come up to it entirely. They meant to encourage the pious practice of sacrificing their children; for pious it was on the principle of expiation by shedding of blood: but there was a great difference between the conceptions they had of their gods, and those which Christians have of the Father and the Son. Their gods had been men, and Saturn was a man when he sacrificed his son. Their ideas of human government led them to notions of divine mediations, and of expiations by shedding of blood, which were so many particular redemptions. But nothing in the reason of the thing, nor in the most superstitious of their prejudices, could lead them to imagine so much rigor in one god, as to exact that another should be sacrificed even by men who meant no expiation, and in whom it was a murder, not a sacrifice; nor so much humility and condescension in another as to make him submit to be this divine victim. They could not imagine any thing so repugnant as this to all their ideas of order, of justice, of goodness, and in short, of theism; though they imagined many other things that were really inconsistent with all these ideas. Those of them, therefore, who embraced this doctrine, after it had been revealed, embraced it, not because they found no difficulty nor inconceivableness in it, which Clarke was to prove by proving it agreeable to sound reason, but merely because it was a part of a relation they believed true, for reasons of another kind; which is nothing to his purpose under this head of argument.

* Ibid. 268.

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XXXVIII.

All that he says more than I have observed upon it; all that follows about the importance of this world of ours, which it is assumed was made for the sake of man, and which, we are told, is as considerable and worthy of the divine care as most other parts of our system, which is likewise as considerable as any other single system in the universe, in order to take off the objection arising from the meanness of the creature; and finally all that follows about the manifestations of God, and the discoveries of his will, supposed to have been made by the same divine Logos to other beings in other systems, in order to take off the imputation of partiality from the Creator; all this, I say, is a rhapsody of presumptuous reasoning, of profane absurdities disguised by epithets, of evasions that seem to answer whilst they only perplex, and in one word of the most arbitrary and least reasonable suppositions. I will bring but one instance more of the excellent manner in which the author of the Evidences proves, that all things necessary to be believed, in order to salvation, or closely connected with these, are most agreeable to sound unprejudiced reason. He proposes* the objection drawn from the want of universality to the Christian revelation. He had proposed it before out of the oracles of reason, and his answer in both places is the same. It had been urged that no revelations, no instituted religions, had been universally received at any time, and by all nations; and that Christianity is in the same case with the rest; that the Son of God did not appear, till the latter ages of the world; and that since he did appear, his gospel has not been received universally, and even his appearance has not been known to a great number of nations. The doctor does not undertake to show how men may receive the benefits of a revelation of which they never heard, though that seems to be his opinion. But he insists triumphantly, that the same objection will lie against natural religion, and boasts again that he can force the objector into absolute atheism. He boasts, like a bully who looks fierce, speaks big, and is little to be feared; for there is no sufficient parity betwen the two cases, and his reason is, on this occasion, as harmless as the other's sword. To affirm that natural and revealed religion are alike unknown in any parts of the world, is to affirm an untruth. That all men have not the same capacities and opportunities of understanding the obligations of natural religion, is true, but proves nothing.

* Ibid. p. 215, 216, 217, et 273.

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Go to any of those people whom we call barbarous, and who seem of all human creatures to have improved their reason the least, you will find the light of nature, though not the light of the gospel shining, faintly indeed, but shining among them; some rules of moral life, some laws for the maintenance of society, some awe and reverence of a Being superior to man, some reward for virtue, some punishment for vice. The religion of nature is known and improved more or less according to the different opportunities which men have, in proportion to their different capacities, and perhaps to the different degrees in which they participate of one common nature. But it is known and observed more or less every where. Nay, there has been often occasion to wish that the same moderation and innocence, which prevailed in ignorant nations, had been found in those, who are more improved in learning and civility; and that the knowledge of virtue had been of greater advantage to natural religion than the ignorance of vice.*

Is this now the case of the Christian religion? How many nations, civilised as well as barbarous, have there been, how many are there still, by whom these tidings of good news, have been never heard, nor even the least rumor of them? How many others to whom they have been carried, and who have refused to hear them, or hearing to believe them? All the truths of natural religion are discoverable, it is allowed on all hands, by the due use of reason alone; and God has left them to be so discovered: for though he has not given the same capacity to all men in any case, he has given the same means to all men in this case. If natural religion is discoverable by all men, revealed religion is so by none: and the divine must have very little regard to consistency, when he objects that God has not given to some the same capacity of making and improving this discovery, as he has given to others: since it is his own doctrine that in those countries where Christianity has been preached, some have believed and some have not believed, according to the different measures of grace, which is the free gift of God, bestowed upon them.

But to carry this matter beyond the power of sophism, and every polemical artifice; let us suppose whole nations as ignorant of natural religion as their bears and their wolves. Natural religion would be still the same and of the same authority. It would be the religion of reasonable nature, and obligatory on

* . . . . . Utinam reliquis mortalibus similis moderatio et abstinentia alieni foret. Tantum plus in illis proficit vitiorum ignoratio, quam in his (nempe Græcis) cognitio virtutis. Justin, lib. ii, c. 2. speaking of the Scythians.

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all who had such a nature. One part of Clarke's reasonings which he supposes falsely to be alike applicable both to that and to the Christian religion, would be well applied in favor of it. They who were endowed with rationality might say with sound reason and the unprejudiced light of nature on their side, "God is not obliged to make all his creatures, even all those that are in appearance of the same species equal: and to assert, that he is, would be a profane diminution of his sovereignty. Let us be thankful for the means he has given us, of improving our knowledge and our happiness. That he has not given them to other creatures, would be a strange reason for not improving them ourselves." They, who were not endowed with so much rationality, would have no more moral obligations incumbent on them than their bears and their wolves. Is this plea now applicable to the want of universality objected to the Christian revelation? It cannot be said without equal absurdity and effrontery. But they, to whom the terms of the Christian religion were communicated, might say, with sound reason and the unprejudiced light of nature on their side, that these terms would have been communicated to all mankind alike, if the revelation had been from God; since all mankind were alike obliged to them, and since they, to whom these terms had not been communicated, would die, and might be damned in their involuntary ignorance of them. Thus their faith would be shocked, or if it was not, if they worked out their salvation with fear and trembling, the fate of the others would continue to be, what they pronounced it, most undeservedly miserable.

This needs little explanation; but to prevent all cavil, and to show with greater evidence how inconsequently Clarke argues, and would argue, even if natural religion wanted universality, as much, and in as absolute a manner as he supposes, and as in fact the Christian religion wants it, let us descend into a more particular comparison. In one case, then, God would have placed his human creatures in very different circumstances, indeed; but the religion of reason obliges us to think that his proceedings towards them would have been proportioned to these circumstances. In the other case, and according to the Christian revelation, he has, for the sake of one man's offence, reduced all mankind to the same deplorable circumstances. It is true, that he sent his son, forty centuries afterwards, to redeem them from the consequences of this situation; but the condition was that they believed in his Son; "For there is no name under heaven by which we can be saved but the name of the man Christ Jesus." They are condemned without any fault of theirs: one sole and uniform condition of saving themselves is imposed on all of them, and the greatest part are deprived even of the

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knowledge of this condition. It will be said, perhaps, which has been hinted already, that as the death of Christ had a retroactive effect on those that lived and died before they were redeemed, so it may be beneficial to those who never heard of it since. But these are the hypotheses of theology and surmises of divines, not the express and clear doctrines of Christianity. Nay, the divines who held so charitable an opinion, would be opposed by other divines. St. Thomas is pleased, notwithstanding this text, to save some of the heathens by a distinction between implicit and explicit faith, and by assuming that the first might be a saving faith to those who lived before the promulgation of the gospel. But he is not so gracious to those who have lived since that time. Since the gospel was promulgated, nothing less than explicit faith will do: and he damns all those who have it not, whether they ever heard of Christ or not, most arbitrarily and most inconsistently. To conclude; there is no parity between the two cases. The first is agreeable to all our ideas of justice and goodness, as well as of sovereignty and order. But no subtilty whatever can reconcile the last to any ideas, except those of caprice, injustice, cruelty and tyranny.

What shall we say now? Is the cause of Christianity too bad to be defended? Or is it defended booty? I think neither. I have too much respect for revelation to think one, and too much charity for the least charitable men alive to think the other. A presumptuous habit of reasoning, and the frenzy of metaphysics are to be charged alone. It would pass for downright madness, if we were not accustomed to it, and if the practice of great and good men did not authorise it in common opinion, to hear a creature, placed in the lowest form of intelligent beings, undertake to penetrate the designs, to fathom the depths, and to unveil the mysteries of infinite wisdom, which the most exalted of created intelligences would adore in silence. When the tradition was recent, and the proofs irrefragable of all the facts on which the authority of Christian revelation is, and can be alone properly founded; the fathers of the church might have stopped the mouths of all pretenders to reason by refusing to reason about a revelation already proved to be divine; by insisting that every thing necessary to be known, was clearly and fully revealed, and that mysteries were recorded to exercise our faith, not our speculations, nor our logic. If they had not gone off this rock, in compliance with the philosophical mode of the age, and with the vanity of their own hearts, they could not have been forced from it. But when they had once engaged in Platonic and Aristotelical reasonings about Christian mysteries, it was too late to go back. They might cry as loudly as they pleased, which they always did when they were pinched, that the judgments and ways of

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God were acatalepta, incomprehensible; but this cry came with an ill grace from them. It could have no effect on their adversaries. They might have made it a cry of triumph. They made it little better than a confession of defeat: and such it has continued ever since.

XXXIX.

If I intended to proceed any further than Clarke leads me on this occasion, I might consider in many more instances, taken from the writings of other divines, and of the fathers of the church, the manner in which they employ reason to account for revelation, sometimes literally, sometimes allegorically, always presumptuously, often ridiculously. To collect all the profane nonsense that has been broached about Eve and the serpent, about the trees of life and knowledge, and about other circumstances of the creation and fall of man, which the curiosity of the woman, the wiles of the serpent, and the uxorious complaisance of Adam effected, would be to collect an immense volume of all that has been written on these subjects by Jews and Christians; for all that has been written upon them is alike absurd. To run through all those passages of the Old Testament, which are lessons of public and private immorality, of immodesty to women, and of sanguinary ferocity to men, which leave no room to be surprised when we hear that there were certain heretics, who thought the God of the Old Testament was not the God of the New, and which show that they who compiled the written law, from Esdras to Simon the Just, had as little discernment in the choice of their materials, as they who compiled the traditions of the oral law afterwards; both of which demonstrate that notions the most unworthy of God, and the most repugnant to the law of human nature, prevailed among the Jews in every age, though they were reconciled in their minds to some very sublime sentiments, and very true opinions; to run through all this, I say, would be not only tedious, but shocking to a man who considered these passages seriously, even to him, perhaps, who had heard them read solemnly a thousand times in his parish-church without being offended at them. Such is the force of habit which familiarises the grossest absurdities to our reason, as it does the most disagreeable sensations to our senses.

Types, and figures, and prophecies, are subjects on which the acute wits of divines have been much exercised, in order to show a connection between the Old Testament and the New, and how one prepares us for and foretells the other. I shall descend into few particulars concerning them. There is no room for reason-

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ing about the two former. Their propriety or impropriety, aptness or unaptness, must appear to the understanding as soon as they are compared with the things typified or figured. Thus, for example, and to mention no other, when St. Austin* tells us, that the ark being made of wood, and having a length and breadth, which answer to the proportions of the human body, and, therefore, signify a human body, it is plain that this vessel prefigured the city of God, or the church, which is saved by that wood, on which the man Jesus Christ was hanged up; that his coming was foretold, and he came; the impropriety and unaptness of this type or figure must strike you on the very first reflection.

More reasoning and a longer process of examination are necessary when prophecies are concerned. The meaning of them is always equivocal and obscure, and it may be doubtful sometimes whether things were done, or recorded to be done, because they had been, or seemed to have been foretold; or whether they had been foretold, because they were to come to pass. Of prophecies we have store, both of such as are applied to the Messiah, of such as foretold what was to happen immediately to him, and to Jerusalem, and of such as remain and must remain, till the consummation of all things, unaccomplished. I shall not set my feet into this labyrinth, where nothing certain is to be found, and from whence it is not easy to get out. I shall be content to observe that many questions are unresolved, many difficulties unremoved, concerning the first kind of prophecies; and that men, even inspired men, have thought sometimes that they discovered prophecies, when they made them, and made them such as could not be maintained with all the learning and all the subtility they have bestowed about them. It was for this reason, I suppose, that Clarke omitted modestly the famous prophecy, "a virgin shall conceive and bear a son," in the place where he enumerates those that foretold the Messiah; though he was sanguine enough to insist on some of no less difficult application; as that "the sceptre shall not depart from Judah till Shiloh comes;" and on others that have had no accomplishment, as that in the Psalms, that God would "give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession," which is become by the event more applicable to Foe or Mahomet, than to the true Messiah.

It may not be out of our way to observe here, that as the vague undetermined sense, and the ambiguous dark expression

* Mensura ipsa longitudinis, altitudinis, latitudinisque ejus significat corpus humanum .... quæ sit salva per lignum in quo pependit .... homo Jesus Christus. Prænunciatus est venturus, et venit.—De Civ. Dei, l. 15.

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of the Bible have led sacred writers and others to suppose prophecies applicable to Christ, where none such were intended; so the Mahometan doctors have taken this advantage to assume that their false prophet is plainly promised, both in the old and new covenant. They quote the text in Deuteronomy, where it is said, that the Lord came, or manifested himself, from Sinai, and rose up from Seir,* that he shined forth from Mount Paran. In this passage they find the law given to Moses, the Gospel to Jesus Christ, and the Koran to Mahomet; and this they support by topographical proofs. Seir is, according to them, that extent of hills, which run from the Red to the Dead Sea, close to Jerusalem. Paran is that mountain in the desert of Arabia, near to Mecca, where Mahomet received the first chapters of his impertinent book. I wonder these commentators have not observed further, that from the Lord's right hand there went a fiery law for them. This epithet could never be more properly applied. Your Homer alludes to fire in his descriptions of battles. The devastations of war are compared by other poets to those of fire; and the Mahometan law might be called fiery at least, as well as the Mosaical. These doctors bring two other quotations from the Psalms. The first is in our translation, Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined.† In the Syraic they say, it is God hath made a crown of glory to shine out of Zion; and they add, that the words, rendered crown of glory, are in the original Hilan Mahmudan, by which the passage would be made to signify, God has sent the domination of Mahomet with splendor out of Zion. The second is taken from the psalm, which is called the Psalm of Solomon,‡ and which describes in the future tense all the glories of his reign. This our divines agree to be so; but having assumed, no one knows why, that Solomon was a type of the Messiah, they assert, that the prophecy looks forward to the spiritual reign of Christ, and that sometimes one and sometimes the other is meant, with a strange confusion of images. The Mahometan doctors fix the sense of it by asserting, against Jews and Christians both, that the Arabic version employs the proper and usual word Medina, where it is said, that they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth: after which they ask, with an air of triumph, what other prophet, besides Mahomet, ever came out of Medina, or even of Arabia? They go farther, and they assume, that Christ himself foretold the coming of Mahomet, when he said, that, if he did not go, the Paraclet would not come; but that when he did go, he would send him.§ They pretend, that this passage was still more honorable for their prophet, that Christ spoke of himself in it as of the precursor of

* C. 33, v. 2. † Ps. lix, 2. ‡ Ibid. lxx. § St. John xvi, 12.

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Mahomet, and that it has been corrupted. But still the prophecy, they say, is sufficiently clear, since Paraclet is in Arabic Ahmed, and since Ahmed or Mahammed are the same.

All that has been said concerning attempts to explain and enforce revelation by reason, relates to internal proofs, as they are called, of the divine original of the Scriptures. Clarke, whom I follow, does not think fit to insist on any external proofs, on such as might establish beyond all reasonable doubt the antiquity, the genuineness, and the authority of the books themselves:* and yet the least grain of such proof as this would outweigh all the volumes of problematical and futile reasoning, that has been so tediously employed to give some color to the other. He refers us indeed to the collection that we find in Grotius† of many particulars contained in sacred, and confirmed by profane history. But Grotius and he should have seen, that every one else would see the fallacy of this pretended proof. The concurrent testimony of cotemporary, disinterested and unprejudiced authors is, no doubt, a principal foundation of the credibility of of any history: and such a testimony these men would have it thought that they produce, when they quote, with much pomp, Egyptian, Phœnician, Chaldean, Indian, and Greek traditions and histories. But none of these were of such authority; or if the most ancient of them, such as Sanchoniathon for instance, and even others more modern, like Berosus, or Abydenus, or Eratosthenes, or Manetho, were disinterested and unprejudiced in their history and chronology; yet it is certain that they, by whom alone these testimonies are conveyed to us, were so little of that character, Josephus and Eusebius for instance, that their design in writing, however they blundered sometimes in the execution of it, was to make profane chronology and history appear conformable to those of the Bible at any rate. That they did so, every scholar knows in some instances, which makes their authority justly precarious in every instance of this kind. But I am willing to suppose, that these impure channels are pure, and that they have conveyed these anecdotes down to us just as they stood in the ancient books, from which they are said to be taken. What will this concession prove? It will prove, that there were various traditions, in a most remote antiquity, concerning the creation, the flood, and the destruction of Sodom, about Abraham and other patriarchs, about David and other kings of the Jews. It will show, that the Phenicians, the Egyptians, the Israelites, and probably every one of the eastern nations, had their systems of traditions, whereof that of the Old Testament alone is come down to us entire. The same names, and many circumstances

* Evid. p. 269. † De Verit. Rel. Christ.

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of the same events, must of course have been mentioned in all. But such a conformity proves nothing. As they agreed in some, they might differ in other particulars: and the whole tenor of those that are lost, might be repugnant to one another, and to that of the Jews. Abraham was a name famous in all of them. Isaac was known to the Arabians as well as Ismael, and Ismael to the Jews as well as Isaac; but they tell very different stories about the legitimacy, and rank, and favor with God of the two brothers, as well as about the descent from them. In one of these, we find a genealogy down to Christ. In the other the Mahometans find a genealogy of all those who were born with the signs of a prophet down to Mahomet. I could set the fallacy of this sort of proof, in general and in particular, as it is applied both to the Old Testament and to the New, in a stronger light; if I did not hasten back from this digression to that which is more immediately my subject, in order to show you a further abuse of this manner of reasoning, on which the absurd pile of artificial theology has been erected, and is supported. The abuse, I mean, is that whereby divines admit the first, the most plausible and the strongest objection that atheism ever made to the existence of God; form a sort of partial alliance with the professors of it, and assist them in undermining the fundamental article of all religion, which they hope vainly to maintain afterwards by the help of a few hypothetical props. This abuse does not arise solely from the presumption which has been spoken of, the presumption of those who think, that the Christian revelation wants to lean on human reason, and to be explained and enforced by it; but from a false reasoning, in which philosophers have indulged their pride, and their curiosity, ever since there was such a thing as philosophy in the world. Let us descend into a particular consideration of this matter, and speak of it a little at large.

XL.

After pleading the cause of natural and revealed religion, I am now to plead that of God himself, if I may use the expression of Seneca, in his treatise De Providentia, against divines and atheists in confederacy.

That chain of reasoning by which we arrive, from a knowledge of the phenomena, at a knowledge of the author of nature, of a first intelligent cause of all things, self-existent and the fountain of all existence, all perfect, and the inimitable original of all perfections, has never been, and can never be broken.—How should reason dissolve a demonstration reason has made,

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by leading us from things perceived by sense and by intuition to that existence which cannot be so perceived?* The atheist cannot be said properly to argue against the most evident, and, in my apprehension, the most comfortable truth which human reason demonstrates. All he can do is to cavil at it: and thus far the association, between him and the theist, has been carried too generally in all ages.

Ignorance that was real, and knowledge that was fantastic, superstition and philosophy combined to create gods, whose existence could not be demonstrated. But these gods, these hypothetical deities, did not interfere with the one Supreme Being, even in the minds of those who worshipped them: "à rebus physicis tracta ratio ad commentitios et fictos deos." These were the most ancient, and like the sun, the first and principal objects of adoration. They were the *dii majorum gentium.*— But they were visible and generated gods, as they are called by Plato: and however confusedly this appellation was employed in common use, the θεοὶ were always distinguished from ὁ θεὸς and τὸ θεῖον. The Timæus distinguishes them sufficiently; and Proclus, in his comment upon it, where he mentions the doubts and disputes that arose about the many, affirms that the belief of one God was uniform. Even they who believed some, of the many, eternal, believed them so by an eternal creation or procession from the one, and if equal in time, yet not so in the order of nature and causality, nor self-existent. Celsus was a strenuous polytheist, and yet when he pleaded for the worship of demons, he asserted, "that the one true God is never to be neglected, neither by day nor night, neither in public nor private, neither in words nor actions; but that our minds ought to be directed constantly to him." In short, when the pagan theists were called upon to explain themselves, they made a profession of their faith, easily reconciled to true theism: and the fathers of the church, who rejected, like Eusebius, these professions as those of men who only denied what they were shamed from owning by Christianity, had a very ill grace; since they themselves were every day employed to explain and alter old doctrines by new, and were nursing up a sort of polytheism, which became little different from that of the pagans, and which needs, at this hour, as much indulgence to make it pass for any thing else.

That there were some men who knew not God in all ages, may be true; but the scandalous task of combating his existence under the mask of theism, was reserved for metaphysicians and

* Ratio quæ ex rebus perceptis ad id quod non percipiebatur aducit.— Acad. Quæst. l. 2.

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theologians. It was undertaken probably as soon as philosophers, who professed such sciences, arose. It was undertaken certainly in an unknown antiquity; for as early as the most ancient, and especially the most learned nations appear to us, we see such doctrines and institutions established as owe plainly their original to objections raised against the proceedings of divine providence. What were the Osiris and Typho of the Egyptians, the Oromazes and Arimanius of the Magi, the good and bad planets of the Chaldeans, the Zeus and Hades of the Greeks, the Monas and Dyas of Pythagoras, the concord and discord or two principles of other philosophers; what were all these but so many inventions, piously designed to account for the mixture of good and evil that there is in the world? To account for the supposed unjust distribution of them, other expedients had been found. Besides a metempsychosis or transmigration of souls, from the bodies of men into those of birds, beasts, fishes, and after a revolution of many ages into the bodies of men again, the Egyptians held a heaven and a hell, into one of which the good were to be received and to live with the goods, whilst the wicked were tormented in the other. Pythagoras and Plato had learned this doctrine from them.* But the former thought to give it more weight by pretending to have gone in person to the infernal shades; and the latter quoted, for the same purpose, Heres of Pamphylia, who had been sent from thence to relate what he had seen and heard there. It is worth while to mention the particulars related by him, in order to show how much the ancient theists were persuaded, that nothing less than the existence of all mankind in a future state, and a more exact distribution of rewards and punishments, could excuse the assumed irregular and unjust proceedings of Providence in this life, on which atheists founded an objection that the others admitted too easily. Æacus then, and Minos and Rhadamanthus sat in judgment in the field of truth, "in campo veritatis." All the souls of the dead were brought before this tribunal. There they were tried, and the separation of the righteous from the wicked was made. The former were placed on the right hand, the latter on the left: the former went upwards to live with the gods in heaven, the latter downwards to live with the furies in hell. Of these, however, a distinction was made. Such souls as were judged curable, and required only a little more purification, the *animæ sanabiles*, were delivered from hell after a year of suffering; and for this purpose a review of souls was made annually. Let me observe, by the way, that the doctrine of purgatory is plainly proved by this doctrine,

* Plato De Rep. l. 10.

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according to Clarke's way of proving, and better than by a passage in one of the books of the Maccabees, to be agreeable to sound reason and the unprejudiced light of nature in general; and that the particular circumstance of an annual review of souls favors extremely a fact which the Franciscan monks asserted, and the council of Basle censured, the annual descent of their founder into purgatory; from whence he delivered, by a special privilege, and carried with him to heaven, the souls of all those of his own order.* What use may be made of these observations, I leave it to you to determine. But I think, you will agree with me on the whole, that the cavils raised, on account of physical and moral evil, are as old as metaphysics and theology.

They who arrived by proofs, *à posteriori*, at a demonstration of God's existence, might think, very rationally, that whatever discoveries they made further concerning his nature, his attributes and his will, must be made by the same means, and that what could not be so discovered, could not be discovered at all. Thus men of common sense might think, and by proceeding in this method, they might be sure of acquiring as much knowledge as they wanted, and be safe against falling into error; since to proceed in this method is to follow natural revelation, and instead of employing our reason about the suggestions of imagination, to employ her about those of nature, which are the suggestions of God himself. But we may be assured, that there were, in those days, as there are in ours, men of uncommon sense, who setting themselves far above the vulgar proceeded on a very vulgar principle, and made themselves the measure of all being, of the Supreme Being among the rest. When modern divines tell us, that we are made after the image of God, they mean it with regard to our intellectual system, and they proceed in the very same manner with those ancient divines who made God after their own image. To say the first is more decent, but the last is always done; for there can be no application from God, whom we do not know, to man. The application must be made, and it always is so, from man, whom we do know, to God.

When we contemplate the works of God "——cum suspicimus magni cœlestia mundi templa super stellisque micantibus æthera fixum, et venit in mentem lunæ solisque viarum;" they give us very clear and determined ideas of wisdom and power, which we call infinite, because they pass, in the exercise of them, all the bounds of our conceptions. Thus far the reasoner

* Beatus Franciscus ex divino privilegio quotannis ad purgatorium descendit, suosque omnes ad cœlum deducit.—Spond. An. 1443.

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à posteriori went formerly, and goes now; because the phenomena conduct him thus far, and give him these ideas with an invariable uniformity. But the reasoners *à priori* have been never thus confined. As soon as they had proved to themselves the existence of a first intelligent cause of all things, which can be proved by the other method alone, they abandoned it, and having assumed that divine and human intelligence are the same, in kind at least, they proceeded in all their reasonings about the nature, moral attributes, and will of God, not only without regard to the phenomena, but often in direct contradiction to them. In short, no true theist ever asserted, with greater assurance, this undeniable truth, that every thing which God has done is for that very reason right, than these false theists have asserted the repugnancy of many things, in the constitution and government of the world, to the moral attributes, and even to the wisdom of God. God is, in their notion of him, nothing more than an infinite man. He knows as we know, is wise as we are wise, and moral as we are moral: but his knowledge, his wisdom, and his morality are in their nature infinite, though they are not exercised alike in the production of all the phenomena, nor with a constant harmony, nor consistency.

XLI.

No man has been more dogmatical on this head than Clarke.* He is much scandalised at those theists, among others who being so absurd as to imagine that goodness and justice are not the same in God, which they are in our ideas, but something transcendent, think it is impossible we should argue with any certainty about them. This opinion, he says, does not stand on any consistent principles, and must finally recur to absolute atheism. Now I own very freely, that the opinion is mine, and that it is one of those which I think it impious to alter, "quæ deseri à me, dum quidem spirare potero, nefas judico." Far from apprehending, that I shall be reduced to atheism by holding it, the doctor seems to me in some danger of being reduced to manifest absurdity by holding the contrary opinion.

After repeating over and over, of all the moral attributes, that they are the same in God as they are in our ideas, and that he who denies them to be so may as well deny the divine physical attributes, the doctor insists only on two of the former, on those of justice and goodness. He was much in the right to contract the generality of his assertion. The absurdity of ascribing tem-

* Evid. p. 26.

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perance for instance, or fortitude to God, would have been too gross, and too visible even to eyes that prejudice had blinded the most. But that of ascribing justice and goodness to him, according to our notions of them, might be better covered, and was enough for his purpose, though not less really absurd.

If justice and goodness be not the same in God as in our ideas,* then we mean nothing when we say, that God is necessarily just and good, and for the same reason, it may as well be said, that we know not what we mean, when we affirm, that he is an intelligent and wise Being. These are the doctor's own words, and surely they show, that great men in common estimation are sometimes great trifiers. When they who are of his opinion, affirm, that God is necessarily just and good, according to their precise notions of justice and goodness, they know, indeed, what they mean, and they mean very presumptuously. When they, who are not of his opinion, say, that God is just and good, they too have a meaning which is not less reasonable for being more modest. They ascribe all conceivable perfections to God, moral and physical, which can belong to a divine nature and to a Supreme Being; but they do not presume to limit them to their conceptions, which is their crime with doctor Clarke. Every thing shows the wisdom and the power of God, conformably to our ideas of wisdom and power in the physical world and in the moral. But every thing does not show, in like manner, the justice and goodness of God, conformably to our ideas of these attributes in either. The physical attributes are in their nature more glaring and less equivocal. The divine and the atheist, therefore deny that to be just or good, which is not one or the other according to their ideas. The theist acknowledges whatever God has done to be just and good in itself, though it does not appear such in every instance, conformably to his ideas of justice and goodness. He imputes the difference to the defect of his ideas, and not to any defect of the divine attributes. Where he sees them, he owns them explicitly: where he does not see them, he pronounces nothing about them. He is far from denying them, as he is from denying the wisdom and power of God. In every case he knows what he means, and his meaning is in every case rational pious and modest.

Will the divine say, that he does not deny the justice and goodness of God, because he proves them in general, *à priori;* and that when he denies them in particular instances, he only denies the complete exercise of them in this world, because that is reserved for another? When he proves then the justice and goodness of God, he proves them as he could not prove even

* Evid. ibid.

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his intelligence, that is, *à priori:* and when he denies them, his denial is absolute; unless a hypothesis, which may be denied on much better grounds, for we speak here of reason, not of revelation, be true. But what is this proof *à priori?* Does it prove that justice and goodness, though they are so connected with the physical attributes, that when we ascribe one we are obliged, by necessary consequence, to ascribe the other to the Supreme Being, are yet so distinct that they may be separated in the exercise of them, and that either of them may act as independently of his wisdom, as of one another? If this be said, they who say it may assume, in consequence, that the Supreme Being is sometimes partial, instead of being always just, and sometimes evil, instead of being always good; which hypothesis might have saved the ancients the trouble of inventing that of the two principles, and sets the reasoning of such a divine as Clarke, on principles as little consistent as that of an atheist. Does the argument *à priori* prove that the justice, and goodness, and wisdom, and power of God are so intimately connected, and are so much the same by nature, that they cannot be separated in the exercise of them? In this case, his natural attributes absorb the moral. The will of God is not determined, sometimes by one moral attribute, and sometimes by another, like that of man, but by a concurrence of them all with his wisdom in every act of it. God is then infinitely wise; he does always that which is fittest to be done. That which is fittest to be done, is always just and good, and the dispute is over.

No, says the divine. However you distinguish, or however you blend the divine attributes, there is a rule, according to which the exercise of these attributes is determined, and must be characterised. This rule is the reason of things, resulting from their eternal relations, which are such as they appear to be to the understandings of all intelligent beings. God appeals to this rule; we have a right to judge him by it: and therefore, when he appears neither just nor good *à posteriori*, though we know him to be so *à priori*, we must have recourse to some hypothesis or other, in order to reconcile the exercise of his attributes to this rule. "Quo teneam protea nodo?" It is hard to follow men, from supposition to supposition, through all the mazes of metaphysical theology. There is no end of it neither: and if I showed Clarke, that the understandings of all mankind, his own among the rest, are extremely apt to understand things to be what they are not, that they are imperfect and depraved,* and that his rule of judging God by man is, therefore, to the last degree impertinent, on this account, as well as on many others;

* Dem. p. 125.

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if all this was shown, I say, it would not serve to silence men, who seek nothing more than to maintain the honor of the gown by having the last word in every dispute. We shall do better, therefore, to go as far back as we can to the origin of this dispute, where we shall find, if I mistake not, that as it is carried on, so it was founded on a previous question or two, miserably begged on one side, and as foolishly granted on the other.

The argument by which Epicurus endeavored to prove that there could be no God, since there was such a thing as evil in the world, is stated more strongly than it is refuted by Lactantius, in his book De irâ Dei. Au. Gellius quotes a passage of Q. Claudius the annalist, wherein the gods are condemned for their iniquitous distribution of good and evil:* and Plutarch introduces his dialogue, concerning the delay of divine justice in punishing the crimes of men, by supposing that Epicurus, who was jnst gone out of the company, had poured forth a whole torrent of blasphemy against the providence of God, for this delay. In the third book of the Nature of the Gods, all the powers of eloquence are called forth, in a sprightly declamation to exaggerate physical and moral evil, and to conclude as directly, as an Academician could conclude, from their existence and from the assumed unjust dispensations of Providence, that there is no God. These instances, to which I refer you, are sufficient. They are ancient themselves, and they are the copies of others much more ancient. But as bold as the charge is, and as high as it was sounded, the belief of God's existence could not have been shaken by it in the minds of men, nor could they have been reduced, as they have been from the most early ages, to defend a demonstrated truth by evasions, by sophisms, by hypotheses, and by all the low expedients that are employed to palliate error, if theists had not been seduced many ways into a confederacy with atheists.

The case before us affords a signal example, the most signal that it is possible to imagine, of the danger we run, whenever we soar, in the vague of abstract reasoning, too far from the phenomena of our system. To be real, our knowledge must rise in it. To be useful, it must be applicable to it. But philosophers appear often, like comets, that rise out of our system, just cross it, disorder it, and go out of it again. The general observation has been inculcated throughout all I have written, and it has been just now applied, particularly to the proceeding of those reasoners *à priori*, who either became atheists themselves, or who supported the cavils of those who were such, till

* Hæc maxime versatur deorum iniquitas, quod deteriores sint incolumiores, neque optimum quempiam internos sinunt diurnare.—L. xvii, c. 2.

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these cavils became arguments founded on theistical principles, and therefore difficult, I might say impossible, for those who had established these principles, to answer. A self-existent Being, the first cause of all things, infinitely powerful, and infinitely wise, is the God of natural theology: and we may advance, without any fear of being disproved, that as the whole system of the universe bears testimony to this great truth, so the whole system of natural religion rests on it, and requires no broader foundation. These systems are God's systems. That of our knowledge is given and limited, that of our duty is prescribed and revealed by him. Both are adequate to one another; both are commensurate: we have no knowledge beyond our duty, nor any duty beyond our knowledge.

What now has artificial theology pretended to add to that knowledge of the deity, which natural theology communicates? It pretends to connect, by very problematical reasonings *à priori*, moral attributes, such as we conceive them, and such as they are relatively to us, with the physical attributes of God; though there be no sufficient foundation for this proceeding in the phenomena of nature: nay, though the phenomena are, as it has been said already, in several cases repugnant. God is just, and good, and righteous, and holy, as well as powerful and wise. Man is made in the image of God: he is little lower than the angels, or inferior gods in the Platonic scheme. Nay, he is superior to them: there is no intermediate being between God and man in the Stoical scheme. "Homini præstare quis possit nisi Deus?" was the question of Chrysippus: and Seneca assumes a friendship, a necessary relation, a likeness between God and good men. The good man is the disciple of God; he emulates God; he is the true offspring of God.*

Such were the notions of ancient theists, and on such notions it was natural for them to assume, that this world was made for man; and that the Supreme Being could have no other motive to make so noble a creature, except that of communicating happiness to him. The atheists saw their advantage. They saw that artificial theology gave them the means of unravelling that thread, which natural theology had spun, and of playing the assumed, against the demonstrated attributes. They might ask, as they did, if God be good and holy, how comes it that there is any such thing as evil in the world? If he be just and righteous, how comes it that the best men have often the greatest share of this evil? The pagan theists were extremely puzzled how to answer these questions, so as to prevent the conclusion, there is

* . . . Amicitia es. . . . . imo etiam necessitudo et similitudo . . . . discipulus ejus, æmulatorque, et vera progenies.—l. De Provid.

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no God: and therefore they had recourse generally to the hypothesis of two coexisting principles, and thought like Plutarch* that it was better to abridge the power of Jupiter, than to impute to him that he caused or suffered evil. When they had not this recourse, they talked mere nonsense, figurative, sublime, metaphysical, but nonsense still. The Stoics, those zealous asserters of the Supreme God, and defenders of his providence, had all a tang of enthusiasm, or they all affected it. Demetrius was of the first sort, no doubt: and so might Seneca be, who quotes him, and who took much pains to work himself, and his friend Lucilius, up to the same temper of mind. At least his treatise about providence is a rhapsody of paradox and enthusiasm, ingenious, affecting, and little to the purpose. I have quoted Lactantius for the argument of Epicurus.† I might quote him for such an answer to it as deserves to have its place among the unexpected sayings, the inopinata of the Stoics, and no where else. God can, but he will not, according to this father, take away the evil that is in the world; because if we did not know evil, we could not know good "....nisi prius malum agnoverimus nec bonum poterimus agnoscere:" and because there is much more advantage and pleasure in the enjoyment of that wisdom by which alone we know the latter than there is trouble and pain in the evil we suffer. "Plus boni ac jucunditatis in sapientiâ quam in malis molestiæ." Thus the father proves, that all things were made for the sake of man, evil as well as good. "Constat igitur omnia propter hominem proposita tam mala quam etiam bona."

That man is the final cause of the whole creation, and that God could have no other motive to make him, except that of communicating happiness to him, are propositions assumed by all the ancient and modern theists, those of paganism and those of Christianity. Love was the first or chief of the gods. Love was the first principle of things. Love of his creatures in idea determined God to draw them forth into existence. That God loves us even to fondness, "usque in delicias amamur,"‡ would such a writer, as Seneca, say. That God loves us heartily, is the language of such a writer as Clarke. Such assumptions as have been mentioned, founded on such notions as these, were inculcated in all ages by artificial theology, and could not fail to be so with success; because they flattered human nature, who is besides her own flatterer and seducer. "Blanda adulatrix et quasi lena sui." The productions of infinite power were confined long to the system of one planet alone, and the exercise of infinite wisdom to the affairs of one animal chiefly. When

* Adv. Stoicos. † De ira Dei, c. 13. ‡ Sen. de Benef. l. 4.

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further discoveries opened by degrees a more noble view of the universe, and experience and reflection obliged men to think, on many occasions, a little more modestly of their own importance, if physics mortified them, metaphysics raised their spirits again. Fantastic knowledge became as indulgent to self-love, and to the pride of the human heart, as real ignorance had ever been: and although some of the puerilities and superstitions, which had prevailed in the nonage of philosophy, were laid aside, yet some of these, and other opinions as extravagant and as inconsistent as these, were taught in the schools of theology. They who came theists, and they who came atheists out of these schools, triumphed equally: the former in those doctrines, that raised very nearly the human up to the divine nature; the latter in those, that debased the divine moral character of God as low as human ideas of moral perfections. Theology furnished arms on both sides. The theist confirmed men in the belief of a Supreme Being, and set their passions on his side, when he represented the predilection of this Being for them who were alone, or in common with the generated gods, the final cause of the whole creation, and who were made to exist, that there might be rational and proper objects of God's munificence in the world. The atheists proceeded, on the same theistical principles, to shake this belief of a Supreme Being. That they must be true, if there was such a Being, he asserted as loudly as the divine. But he worked himself up to doubt, and he set, in his turn, the passions of men on his side, by declaiming pathetically against the physical and moral evil, that abounds in the world; by censuring the dispensations of providence in it, and by showing that many of the phenomena are not reconcilable to our ideas of holiness, of goodness, of justice, and at the same time of wisdom and power, He came at last to deny that there was any God; because he could not discover such a metaphysical and moral god as artificial theology had imagined.

The arguments of the atheists were so strong *ad hominem*, for they are such in no other manner, that the theist found himself obliged to seek the usual refuge of philosophers, who affect to dogmatise beyond their knowledge, and even beyond all their real, their clear and well determined ideas; the refuge I mean of hypotheses, by which they endeavor to evade what they cannot answer. That of two principles was the refuge of pagans from time immemorial, and of a famous sect of heretics in the Christian church. That of the fall of man, and of the continued malice of the first tempter, the old serpent, who caused it, was the refuge of orthodox Christians. By these they hoped to account for the introduction of physical and moral evil, consistently with the propositions assumed, "that the world was

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made for man, and man to be happy in it." By the hypotheses of a futnre state of rewards and punishments, both pagans and Christians hoped to reconcile the dispensations of Providence in this life, to the moral attributes of God, and to the rule of his conduct, which they assumed likewise to be the same in him, as they are in human ideas.

The hypothesis of two principles, self-existing, infinite, opposite, is full of absurdities. But abstract it from these, and consider it only as it accounts for the introduction of evil, and it will appear much more plausible, though it be not more reasonable, than that of the fall of Adam, and the malice of the devil. The first saves, or seems to save, all the attributes of the good God. They all exist in him, as the theist conceives them. They are all exerted by him, as the theist assumes. But he is opposed by a coequal bad principle: and that mixture of good and evil, which appears in the frame and government of the world, arises from the perpetual struggle of these rival powers. The last is full of absurdities likewise; but abstract it from these, and still you will find, that it saves the divine attributes in no respect. It answers no purpose in opposition to atheism, and it could be so applied in good earnest, whatever other purpose it had been made to answer, by no theists who understood their own hypothesis, and the objections of their adversaries. The goodness, and even the wisdom of God lie just as much exposed for suffering an inferior being, his creature and a creature in actual rebellion, to baffle the designs it is assumed that he had, as they would lie, if these designs were acknowledged to have been imperfectly executed by him. The severity with which he punished our first parents, for a fault, which he foreknew, that they would commit when he abandoned their freewill to the temptation of committing it, for there would be too much horror in supposing them predestinated to commit the fault; this severity, I say, and much more that which has been exercised on the whole race of mankind, who share the punishment, though they had no share in the crime, cannot be reconciled to our ideas of justice. The introduction of physical and moral evil, therefore, could not be imputed more really to the Supreme Being independently of this hypothesis, than he is made the author of them by it, with the aggravating circumstance of punishing the innocent for what he permitted, in one sense of the word, the guilty to do.

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XLII.

The dispensations of providence, in the distribution of good and evil, stand in no need of any hypothesis to jnstify them: and if they did, that of a future state of rewards and punishments would be insufficient. These two propositions may be made, I think, very evident: and I shall endeavor to make them so, before I quit the subject. Reason will neither deny, nor affirm, that there is to be a future state: and the doctrine of rewards and punishments in it has so great a tendency to enforce civil laws, and to restrain the vices of men, that reason, who cannot decide for it on principles of natural theology, will not decide against it, on principles of good policy. Let this doctrine rest on the authority of revelation. A theist, who does not believe the revelation, can have no objection to the doctrine in general.— But even a theist, who does believe the revelation, may refuse to admit the doctrine on principles on which it is established by divines, and may disapprove the use they make of it in several respects.

The hypotheses, that have been crayoned out, are the chief pillars of artificial theology. Some of them were assumed in compliance with the overweening notions of their own worth and importance, which men are prone to entertain, and by which they raise themselves up to the imaginary heights that have been mentioned: though the distance between our friend Gay's Fly, in his fables, and the infinite self-existent Being, is not a whit greater than that between this Being and Socrates or St. Paul, the two apostles of the gentiles. Other hypotheses were invented to maintain these; and by tagging one hypothesis to another, men deviated at least so far from natural theology and raised so much confusion in their notions about it, that they had no means left of returning to the first principle of this theology, nor of clearing to common apprehension a little of this confusion, but those of another hypothesis. Strange effect of theological skill! It makes a demonstrated truth depend on a precarious supposition. If there is not a future state, God is neither good nor just, according to our ideas of goodness and justice in his dispensations. If he is not good and just, according to our ideas of these moral attributes, neither can the physical attributes, such as infinite wisdom and power, belong to him: and a Being, who has noue of these, is not God. But there is a future state. Thus divines have dared to argue; and I am justified in saying, that they betray the cause of God to the atheist, when they join with him in so many points, that nothing remains opposed to him, in de-

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fence of God's existence, but the problematical and futile reasonings they employ to prove a future state.

We are apt to carry the judgments we make into extremes, and the characters we give into panegyrics or satyrs. The examples of this kind are without number, but none are so remarkable as those which we find in writers ancient and modern, concerning the human nature. No creature is so miserable, in some descriptions, nor so necessitous as man. He comes into the world bemoaning his state. He grows up, and passes through the human state, exposed to many wants and bodily infirmities, unknown to the brute creation. You remember, no doubt, those fine verses in Lucretius:*

> Tum porro puer, ut sævis projectus ab undis
> Navita, nudus humi jacet infans, indigus omni
> Vitali auxilio . . . . . .
> Vagituque locum lugubri complet, ut æquum est
> Cui tantum in vitâ restat transire malorum.
> At variæ crescunt pecudes, &c.

No creature is to be compared with man in other descriptions, and in a contrary sense. He was made of earth; but this earth was impregnated with celestial seeds, if you will take Ovid's† word for it.

> . . . . Recens tellus, seductaque nuper ab alto
> Æthere, cognati retinebat semina cœli.

He was made in the image of the gods, and his very form denoted his divine original.

> Os homini sublime dedit, cœlumque tueri
> Jussit, &c.

Some of these writers degrade even the human mind, and that intelligence and reason wherein we triumph. Plato, who in one mood raises man up to the contemplation of the abstract forms of all things, sends him in another for instruction to the beasts of the field; and the Hospes in the Politicus reckons their conversation among the means of improvement in philosophy and the knowledge of nature which men enjoyed under the reign of Saturn. Montagne, another prose-poet, deals with man as divines deal with God, and having drawn down human nature as low as he could, he raises that of some other animals so high, that he ascribes a sense of religion to elephants, and represents them deep in meditation and contemplation before the rising sun, and attentive at certain hours of the day to perform certain acts of devotion. He took this from Pliny,‡ and

* Lib. v. † Metam. l. i. ‡ L. viii, c. 1.

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he might have added, on the same authority, among other excellences, that they understood the language of their country, loved glory, and were great moralists; a commendation seldom due to men, "quæ etiam in homine rara." But Cotta, in the third book of the nature of the gods, goes so far as to assert that human reason, far from being an advantage, is a disadvantage to man, the worst present that heaven could make him, and one of the plagues of human life. "Pestifera multis, admodum paucis salutaris." The Academician complains that it is bountifully and largely bestowed, "tam munificè et tam largè dari." But the whole chorus of theistical philosophers and of divines boast it to be the distinguishing gift of God to man, that which gives him a pre-eminence and a right of command over his fellow-creatures. Ovid* calls him for this reason, sanctius his animal. and the Stoic, whom Cotta answered, had not only distinguished him from other animals, but coupled him with the gods. The sole beings who have reason are gods and men .... "dii et homines quibus profectò nihil est melius." In a word, metaphysicians have refined and subtilised their discourses on this favorite theme into a jargon which has no meaning at all, or a blasphemous meaning; and they would stand justly exposed to the ridicule of common sense, if common sense could resolve to laugh at blasphemy. There have been those who taught that the human is a portion of the divine soul. Others† have been more modest, and have allowed that the former is a created being, "creatura quæ mens dicitur rationalis," but a being of so high an order that there is none superior, except the Supreme Being, and that these two are more closely and intimately united than the human soul is to the body it informs.

There is a middle point between these extremes, where the truth lies: and he who seeks it may find it. He will not find what the principle of divine or even of human intelligence is. But he will soon find that the distance between them, whatever they are, is so immense as to admit in reality no degree of comparison. He will find on the other hand many such degrees between the human intelligence and that of various animals.— He may be induced perhaps to think, that intellectual faculties and corporeal senses, of the same and of different kinds, are communicated in some proportion or other to the whole race of animals; but he will be still conscious of his superiority, as they themselves are, most apparently, such of them at least as know mankind; not the sagacious elephant alone, who submits to his service, but the lion and the tiger who make him occasionally their prey.

* L. viii, c. 1. † Porph. Plotin. St. Austin, Malb., &c.

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Man is then the principal inhabitant of this planet, a being superior to all the rest. But will it follow from hence, that the system wherein this planet rolls, or even this planet alone, was made for the sake of man? Will it follow that infinite wisdom had no other end in making man, than that of making a happy creature? Surely not. The suppositions are arbitrary, and the consequences absurd. There is no pretence to say that we have any more right to complain of the evils which affect our state, than our fellow creatures of the evils which affect theirs, or which are common to both. Many of them have plainly some foresight of the future, and of physical effects more than we have. But all of them feel for the present. Because God has given intellectual powers superior to theirs, to them more instinct perhaps, to us more reason certainly, is he cruel and unjust, because he has not given us invulnerable and impeccable natures? By reason we learn to avoid, or to soften, or to remedy, many evils to which we are exposed. By reason we ought to learn to bear such as can be neither avoided, nor softened, nor cured. If we employ our reason only to aggravate these evils in our imaginations, and to complain more loudly, far from having a better right to do so, we are on this very account just so much the more impertinent and absurd.

The whole tribe of divines assert, that the goodness of God required, he should make the world for the sake of man, and man purposely to make a happy creature. Those among them, who rise higher in metaphysics, assert, "that God can act for himself alone, and can create rational beings for no reason but that of being known and loved by them."* Now I, who know just as much of this matter as all or any of these dogmatical persons, deny, on my own authority, what they affirm, on theirs; and, whilst they pretend arrogantly to demonstrate, will presume modestly and diffidently to guess. What they say, hangs ill together. I leave it to them to reconcile, among a multitude of other inconsistencies, and shall only observe, on the latter part, since we reason on human ideas, for we have no others whereon to reason, that they who advance it, entertain a very false notion of beneficence. An heathen moralist would have taught them better. No one confers a benefit, who has himself and his own interest and satisfaction alone in view, "si una dandi causa est se intueri ac commodum suum, illud non beneficium sed Fœnus est." From hence Senecat concludes, that all the benefits we receive from God, are truly benefits; since God can reap no advantage to himself in bestowing them, and would, therefore, bestow none, if utility to himself could be his motive. "Nam

* Vid. Malb. Preface to the Recherche, &c. † L. 4.

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si una beneficii dandi causa sit dantis utilitas, nulla autem ex nobis utilitas Deo speranda est, nulla dandi Deo beneficii causa est."

But the former part of what is asserted on this occasion by divines requires much more discourse. They who assert that man and the happiness of man were the final causes of the creation, seem to have ideas no better determined of goodness, than the others of beneficence; for if there be not a certain proportion kept in the exercise of it, the seeming goodness of the heart is really the weakness of the mind. You see at once, what numberless instances might be produced to exemplify this truth. Let me ask now the greatest flatterers of human nature, what proportion there is between the excellences of it, and the goodness of God, that should determine his infinite wisdom to judge it essential to his goodness, when he resolved to make man, to make a planet the more for the habitation of this ideal creature? The habitation is fit for him, and he is fitted to live in it. He could not exist in any other. But will it follow, that the planet was made for him, not he for the planet? The ass would be scorched in Venus or Mercury, and be frozen in Jupiter or Saturn. Will it follow, that this temperate planet was made for him, to bray and to eat thistles in it?

But I hear the divine reply, that man is a rational being, far superior to the brute creation, and alone more worthy than all of them, to be the final cause of the world he and they inhabit. That he alone has reason may be too much to grant, since several of the faculties, in the exercise of which it consists are exercised by other animals, as every man, who is not Cartesian enough to believe more than Des Cartes believed himself, must allow. But whether the difference of that, which is called reason in man, and the intelligence of other animals, be in kind or in degree only, one way or other certain it is, that his superiority over them is very real and very great, according to all our ideas of order. It was this consideration, and this partial comparison of him with the creatures of his own system, that made the human pass for the first of all rational natures, after the divine, among those who had no suspicion of any others. Such were the narrow and confined ideas which it appears, by sacred as well as profane philosophy, that all the ancients entertained of the works of God. Modern discoveries in astronomy have presented them to us in a more noble scene. We cannot doubt, that numberless worlds and systems of worlds compose this amazing whole, the universe; and as little, I think, that the planets, which roll about our sun, or those which roll about a multitude of others, are inhabited by living creatures fit to be the inhabitants of them. When we have this view before our

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eyes, can we be stupid or impertinent and vain enough to imagine, that we stand alone or foremost among rational created beings? We who must be conscious, unless we are mad and have lost the use of our reason, of the imperfection of our reason? Shall we not be persuaded rather, that as there is a gradation of sense and intelligence here from animal beings imperceptible to us for their minuteness, without the help of microscopes and even with them, up to man in whom, though this be their highest stage, sense and intelligence stop short and remain very imperfect; so there is a gradation from man, through various forms of sense, intelligence and reason, up to beings who cannot be known by us, because of their distance from us, and whose rank in the intellectual system is even above our conceptions? This system as well as the corporeal, that is the whole physical or natural system, for such the two properly are, must have been alike present to the divine mind before he made them to exist. If we assume, therefore, that he made this world for the sake of man, we must assume *à fortiori* that he made every other world for the sake of the rational inhabitants he designed to place in it.

Now it seems to me to follow from this hypothesis very absurdly, that one of these systems was made in mere subserviency to the other: whereas it is certainly agreeable to the clearest and most distinct ideas we are able to frame, of the proceedings of infinite wisdom, to believe that each of them was made in some degree of subserviency, and the animal system perhaps in the greatest, to the other, and that both of them were made on some greater motive, and for some greater purpose, whatever these were, than either. It might be observed, as another absurdity, that according to this hypothesis the whole universe was made for some minute parts of it, and that the divine architect of nature proceeded in an unnatural method, making the whole relatively to these, instead of making these and all the other parts relatively to the whole. But I choose rather to pass it over, and to observe that the hypothesis I oppose is not only unreasonable in speculation, but evidently contradicted by the phenomena. Nothing in truth can be so preposterous as the conduct of the divine and atheist appears to be, whilst they deplore the miserable state of mankind, and the evils that abound in a world which they assume was made for the sake of mankind.

Both of them reason *à priori* from assumed moral attributes of the divinity. So they call their method of reasoning; and such it is in a false sense. It cannot be such in a true one; since their ideas of these attributes are very human ideas, applied arbitrarily to the divine nature, not founded in any knowledge of it that they have really. No matter. They have accustomed men

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to this absurd imposition, and they proceed. Both of them pretend to be led from proposition to proposition down to their different conclusions. But the truth is, that they have their different conclusions from the first in view. The premises, wherein they concur so amicably, are plainly contrived to establish such notions of the moral attributes of God as shall appear repugnant to what we see and feel and know, when they are applied to the constitution of the world and to the state of mankind in it: whereas it is from this constitution and this state alone, that we can acquire any ideas of the divine attributes, or a right to affirm anything about them. When they have done this, a Collins concludes, that there is no God; and a Clarke, that there is a future state of rewards and punishments.

Let us proceed in another method, argue from knowledge not from imagination, and advance nothing more than the former will justify. The former will justify enough to refute abundantly the two allies.

XLIII.

The demonstration of God's existence is founded in knowledge, and pursued with intuitive certainty through every step of it. This the divine will admit; and this the theist is so little able to deny, that he has recourse to cavil, as it has been said already, and endeavors vainly to unravel the thread he cannot break. I assume, therefore, nothing more than what is proved, when I assert, that the Supreme Being is infinitely wise as well as powerful: and if he be infinitely wise, I need not stand to prove, that he always knows and always does that which is fittest to be done. To choose the best end, and to proportion the means to it, is the very definition of wisdom. Two things are then evident. One, that since infinite wisdom determined to call into existence every being that does exist, and to constitnte that universal system, which we call the system of nature, it was right and fit that infinite power should be exercised for this purpose. The other, that since infinite wisdom not only established the end but directed the means, the system of the universe must be necessarily the best of all possible systems, which it could not be, nor even a consistent scheme, unless the whole was the final cause of every part, and no one nor more parts the final causes of the whole. The universe is an immense aggregate of systems. Every one of these, if we may judge by our own, contains several; and every one of these again, if we may judge by our own, is made up of a multitude of different modes of being animated and inanimated, thinking and unthinking, rational and irrational, different

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natures designed for different purposes, but all concurring in that one common system, as we discern in too many instances not to have reason to believe it in all. Just so it is with respect to the various systems, and systems of systems, that compose the universe. As distant as they are, and as different as we may imagine them to be, they are all tied together by relations and connections, by gradations and dependencies. The great material parts of our solar system act on one another in more ways than philosophy has been yet able to discover, and that of comets is not, perhaps, the only communication that other systems have with ours. Unthinking matter is dispersed in various forms throughout the universe: and we see a gradation of them in the world we inhabit, from stones and other inert bodies, up to vegetables and such as have in themselves, however inanimate, a natural though not spontaneous activity. So may we believe most reasonably that various forms of thinking substance, or the faculties of sense and thought in various degrees, are dispersed likewise throughout the universe. We observe a gradation of them here, and we may well persuade ourselves, that there is a gradation of them through various ranks of beings, from the lowest degrees in our world to the highest in some other.

I pretend not to dogmatise: but without having so much presumption I may say, that the notions here advanced seem much more conformable to those of a Supreme Being, and to all our ideas of order, than the contrary. They are probable in speculation, and the appearances of things are favorable to them: whilst the hypothesis that assumes the world, and did formerly assume the whole universe, made for man, and man solely to be happy, is not founded in reason, and is contradicted by experience. By the constitution of the material, and by that of the intellectual world, more dependent on the former perhaps than we are willing to believe, the human race is exposed to various evils, permanent and contingent, physical and moral. Of this philosophers have complained in all ages. This they could not reconcile to the goodness and justice of a God, such as they conceived him, nor on their principles: and therefore they cut the knot by denying him, or threw themselves into an endless labyrinth of disputation by the acknowledgment of him. But on such principles as are here laid down, and in the truth of things most certainly, there is no ground for complaint, and there is abundant cause to give thanks. Though this world, and much more the universe, were not made for the sake of man, and though infinite wisdom contrived, and infinite power executed the stupendous work for some nobler end, and some greater purpose, than the advantage of one poor vain mortal creature; yet has not the care of man been neglected in it. "In

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primâ illâ constitutione," says Seneca,* speaking of the world as the work of the gods, "cum universa disponerent, etiam nostra viderunt, rationemque hominis habuerunt:" which opinion, so little consistent with the doctrine he teaches elsewhere, is far more reasonable. We labor hard, we complicate various means to arrive at one end: and several systems of conduct are often employed by us to bring about some one paltry purpose. But God neither contrives, nor executes, like man. His means are simple, his purposes various: and the same system that answers the greatest, answers the least. Thus regard has been had to man, and not to him alone, but to all other animals, according to their different natures and ends.

Infinite wisdom appears every where. Every new discovery, and how many and how marvellous have these been! is a new proof of this wisdom, as well as of the power of God. The power of executing is seen in every instance, and though we cannot discern the wisdom of contrivance and direction, which are more remote from our observation, in every instance, yet we see them in so many that it becomes the highest absurdity not to acknowledge them in all. They, who do not acknowledge them so, judge of the proceedings of an all-perfect Being (for even the atheist disputes, on this occasion, for argument's sake, on the supposition that there is one) as they would not judge of those of a prince or minister of state, who had acquired and deserved, by a long course of political conduct, the reputation of wisdom. These they would not dare to pronounce unwise in any case, because they saw the measures imperfectly, and because the ends were unknown to them. Yet thus they judge with respect to God. "Why does the rain pour down into the sea, whilst the sandy deserts of Lybia are parched with drought? Why do wintry storms happen in the summer, and irregular seasons destroy our harvests?" Such questions as these have often been asked, and all of them relatively to man. They have been answered in many instances by new discoveries, after the deaths of those who asked them: and posterity has been convinced, though they did not live to be so, that when they triumphed in them, they triumphed in their ignorance. Democritus, Epicurus, Strato, Alphonsus of Castile, in short all the makers and menders of worlds, showed nothing but their ignorance and their presumption. They attempted to rise above God, and they are become the jest of mankind.

Though I think that the moral attributes of the Supreme Being are absorbed, as I expressed myself before, in his wisdom, that we should consider them only as different modifications of

* De Benef. l. vi.

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this physical attribute, whatever ideas we may frame on the phenomena, and that we must always talk precariously and impertinently when we presume to apply our ideas of them to the appearances of things; yet I think it proper to show the divine and the atheist that even the goodness of God is not hard to defend against them both, by every one who denies, as every one may most reasonably, the question they beg, and grant in consequence of their alliance to one another.

The wisdom is not so often discernible by us, as the power of God, nor the goodness as the wisdom. But a multitude of the phenomena being conformable to our ideas of goodness, we may reason about it as we did just now about the divine wisdom.—If our adversaries show that men are exposed to many physical and moral evils, we can show much more good of both kinds that God has bestowed on us, or put it into our power to procure to ourselves. The evils we complain of are constant or occasional effects of the constitution of a world that was not made for our sakes. But the means to soften some, to prevent others, and to palliate and even to cure those that cannot be prevented, are so many instances of the positive goodness of God, which ought to be brought to account and set against the evils with greater gratitude and more fairly than they are by men who pass them slightly over, whilst they descend into every particular of the other sort, aggravate the least, and declaim pathetically and partially on all.

It would be easy to confirm and illustrate, what is advanced in the physical part by numerous and unanswerable proofs, which are to be found in the writings of natural philosophers. These men have done more service to true theism than all the metaphysical reasoners *à priori:* or to say something stronger and equally true, they have done it more service than divines and atheists in confederacy have done it hurt. It is impossible to read, with attention and without prejudice, what the former have written, and not to be convinced by fact, and by reason grounded on fact, not on hypothesis, first that we ought to consider the world we inhabit no otherwise than as a little wheel in our solar system; nor our solar system any otherwise than as a little but larger wheel in the immense machine of the universe; and both the one and the other necessary perhaps to the motion of the whole and to the preordained revolutions in it: nor without being convinced, secondly, that the wisdom, or, if you had rather say so, the goodness of God has provided amply for the well-being of man in this world, and of the whole animal kind, who are objects of the divine care as well as he, according to their various destinations. In fine, and to take away every atheistical subterfuge; whether we say, that the several species of animals

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were the final causes of these things, which seem particularly adapted to the use of each; or whether we say, that the world was made such as it is, without any regard to them; the proofs of divine wisdom and goodness will be equally strong: for if the world was made for the universe only, and without any regard to its future inhabitants, this wisdom and goodness were exercised as much in fitting these inhabitants to live commodiously in a world already made, as they could have been in making a world on purpose for them.

But we are not to think in this manner of the divine proceedings, nor to imagine that in them one plan succeeded another. Both were alike present to the mind of God. Our planet might have been, even uninhabited, very fit for all the mechanical purposes of it in the material system. But there might be other purposes, which the creation of animals was necessary to answer: and since they were created, we ought to think that they were so for some purpose. It might be determined in the divine ideas, that there should be a gradation of life and intellect throughout the universe. In this case, it was necessary that there should be some creatures at our pitch of rationality, and others endued with all the degrees of life, sense, and intellect, which we observe in the several species from the insect up to man. This world might be allotted to such kinds and orders of animated beings: and though it was made for the universe, not for them, some regard might be had to them, and to their well-being in the constitution of it. They were not made to be miserable. But even man was not made to be happier than it was consistent with this part of the material system, and with his own rank in the intellectual, that he should be.

XLIV.

The truth is, that when we contemplate the phenomena, we cannot fail to discern, unless we live in a mist of metaphysics, how repugnant to them it is to affirm, that the world was made for the sake of man alone. Some modern divines have been candid enough to give up the point. Archbishop King at least, in his essay on the original of evil, saw so plainly that even the natural and real attributes of God, even his wisdom and his power, could not be otherwise defended against the cavils of atheism and of theology, that he scrupled not to declare the opinion to be absurd, and what no one would object, who was not blinded with pride and ignorance.* But we discern at the

* C. 4. Sec. 2.

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same time in the contemplation of the phenomena, that this world is accommodated in certain respects to the utility of the animals it contains, and that their natures are adapted in many more to the nature of the world. Thus the oblique position of the earth, by the inclination of its axis to the plane of the ecliptic, makes a more equal distribution of the sun's heat throughout the year, and in the different zones or climates, than there could be in any other position. Thus again, men and all other species of animals are fitted for different climates and different elements, wherein they find the nourishment and the employment proper to their different natures. The animal kind may seem to be a final cause of the first. The constitution of the world is evidently the reason of the last. I descend into no more particulars. You will find an abundance of them collected by Ray, Derham, Nieuentyt, and other writers, wherein the power and wisdom of God in the whole creation are displayed: and such proofs are brought that man and every species of the animal kind are fitted, in their very formation for their state here, as nothing but the most irrational obstinacy can resist. The minutest instances are decisive, and those which seem the most obvious, because the most common, appear on a closer inspection not less astonishing than the greatest phenomena, and the more remote from observation. The animal eye, for instance, is not less astonishing in its various situations, motions and particular uses, than the eye of the world the sun. To these writings let me refer you. Natural philosophy, thus applied, leads irresistibly to natural theology, and gives a just contempt for the figments and hypotheses of artificial. Read, contemplate, adore, give thanks, and be resigned.

Methinks I hear a sincere and devout theist, in the midst of such meditations as these, cry out, "No, the world was not made for man, nor man made to be happy. The objections urged by atheists and divines against the wisdom and goodness of the Supreme Being, on these arbitrary suppositions, destroy their own foundations. Mankind is exposed, as well as other animals, to many inconveniences and to various evils, by the constitution of the world. The world was not, therefore, made for him, nor he only to be happy. But he enjoys numberless benefits, by the fitness of his nature to this constitution, unasked, unmerited, freely bestowed: and though he returns, like other animals, to the dust, yet neither he nor they are willing to leave the state wherein they are placed here. The wisdom and the goodness of God are therefore manifest. I thank thee, O my Creator! that I am placed in a rank, low in the whole order of being, but the first in that animal system to which I belong: a rank wherein I am made capable of knowing thee, and of dis-

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covering thy will, the perfection of my own nature and the means of my own happiness. Far be it from me to repine at my present state, like those who deny thee; or like those who own thee, only to censure thy works, and the dispensations of thy Providence. May I enjoy thankfully the benefits bestowed on me by thy divine liberality. May I suffer the evils to which I stand exposed, patiently, nay willingly. None of thy creatures are made to be perfectly happy, like thyself; nor did thy goodness require that they should be so. Such of them as are more worthy objects of it than thy human creatures, superior natures that inhabit other worlds, may be affected in some degree or other by physical evils, since these are effects of the general laws of matter and motion. They must be affected too in some degree or other by moral evil, since moral evil is the consequence of error as well as of disorderly appetites and passions, and since error is the consequence of imperfect understanding. Less of this evil may prevail among them. But all that is finite, the most exalted intelligences must be liable to some errors. Thou, O God! art alone that Being who is liable to none, and to whom infallibility and impeccability belong."

> Duc me, parens celsique dominator poli,
> Quocumque placuit. Nulla parendi mora est.
> Assum impiger.*

Shall we suppose now that an atheist and a divine break in upon the theist, and interrupt his pious meditations by insisting still, like the echoes of Epicurus, that if there be a God he must be infinitely good as well as wise and powerful, and by asking then how it comes to pass that there is any evil in the world? How comes it to pass that the happiness of man is not more complete, and better provided for in it? Our theist would not be embarrassed. His answer would be more ready than their reply. The first absurdity consists in this, that they apply their notions of goodness to the divine nature; and the second is this, that the argument they raise on these notions proves a great deal too much. Enough has been said concerning the first, and if the theist reasons on their notions of divine goodness, it is merely *ex abundantiâ*. But he will expose the second, by observing that if goodness ought to be, as they assume, the sole directing principle in this case, and if wisdom ought to contrive and power to execute under this direction, the happiness of man ought to be proportionable to the goodness of God, that is infinite; than which no greater absurdity can be conceived. But if we assume, in opposition to these confederates, that

* Sen. Ep. 107.

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divine wisdom, whereof we have ideas much better determined than we have of divine goodness, ought to be deemed in this as in every other case the directing principle of divine conduct, it will follow without any absurdity, nay most agreeably to the reason of things, that the effect may be proportionable to the cause, that is infinite. It implies contradiction to say that God should have made a creature infinitely happy, as happy as himself. But it implies none to say that he made a system of creation infinitely wise, and the best of all possible systems.

After this our theist would be apt to make many just reproaches to the two confederates. He would reproach the atheist with his spirit of cavil and the unfairness of his proceedings. You pretend, would he say, that you cannot believe a God, because you cannot reconcile many appearances, nor the state of mankind in general, to your notions of goodness. But on your principles you would not acknowledge him, if the proofs of his goodness were as clear, as uniform, and as numerous as those of his wisdom; for even to these you do not yield. These however are conformable to the notions of wisdom you must have, if you have any at all. You may cavil about the proofs of his goodness, and produce instances that seem repugnant to it, and that would be so if your hypothesis was true. But the proofs of his wisdom have nothing equivocal nor problematical in them upon any hypothesis. You can produce no instances that even seem to be repugnant to it. Whilst natural philosophy was ill cultivated, and ill understood indeed, men founded their objections to the wisdom of God in their ignorance. But since the noble science has been improved by experiment and geometry, since greater discoveries of the causes and effects of the phenomena in the economy of the world have been made, every new discovery has been a new proof of the wisdom of God, and it has shone conspicuous in the very instances brought against it.

It is a vain undertaking to go about to convince men of the goodness of God, who are obstinate enough to resist such evident demonstrations of his wisdom, or not to see that all-perfect Being must always be determined by the harmonious concurrence of all his perfections; and not in one instance by his goodness, in another by his justice, and so on. When we say, that he is infinitely wise, we mean that he does on every occasion that which is fittest to be done, and it would imply contradiction to assert this, and to deny the other. But however the theist might go one step further in reproaches to the atheist. With what face, might he say to him, can you object to the goodness of God, that men are exposed to general evils, to tempests, to earthquakes, to famine, to pestilence, as well as to par-

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ticular evils, to pain, to sickness, and to violent death? Is God not good, because they are exposed to evils that result necessarily from the constitution of a world, which, if we should allow it to have been made for man, was made for the universe too, and to all of which evils they expose themselves voluntarily for no other reason than to indulge the ruling passion of their minds, and to sate their ambition or their avarice for instance, if these were to be sated? God has given us means, as I said above, to avoid or to palliate, or to cure these evils in many cases. But men court them. The evils, that may be said to come from God, are, for the most part, soon over. The greatest of these calamities are seldom renewed; and few men have been, I suppose, exposed to the plague twice, or involved twice in the ruins of an earthquake. But ambition, avarice, and other ruling passions, are never sated: and the same persons expose themselves anew and continually to all the evils that accompany the pursuit of them. The theist might conclude this head very properly, by saying to the atheist, these evils which you sound so highly and with so ill a grace, for the reasons that have been given, must be contingent effects of the constitution of the world, or they must be caused by particular directions. Take your choice. If you say the first, you say nothing that is inconsistent with the goodness of a Creator and Governor, whilst you confirm my hypothesis, that this world was made for the universe, not for man. If you say the last, you contradict yourself: you own that there is a God, and you acknowledge his providence.

The same theist might press his two adversaries, the atheist and the divine both, in this manner still further. If you say, that God has not created the best of all possible systems in creating the universe, you deny that infinite wisdom which you, the divine, assert, and the proofs of which you as well as I have challenged the atheist to controvert. If you say that he has, you must either cease your complaints, or you must continue to complain on one of these two principles, that the Creator ought to have established a system that was not the best relatively to the whole of his design, that is to the universe, but the best relatively to man; or else that he ought to have created no such being as man. Thus you are driven from absurdity to absurdity; for thus you do something more absurd, if possible, than a direct denial of the wisdom of God would be. One of you admits, and the other cannot controvert this wisdom; and then you both assert, that he should not have acted conformably to it. His goodness should have controlled his wisdom. He should have changed the order of the universe, or he should have broken the chain of intellectual beings. Such an assumed

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conduct may be conformable to your ideas of goodness. But the ideas of God, if we may ascribe ideas to him, no more than his ways, are not those of man; and besides, such a conduct as this, even in human affairs, can answer no ideas but those of weakness, frailty, prepossession and partiality. These, therefore, you would ascribe to the all-perfect Being. Such is your impiety. One of you, that he may have a pretence to doubt of God's existence. The other, that he may have a pretence to be dogmatical about the designs of God, and the future dispensations of his providence.

XLV.

It may be said that the theist argues hypothetically in defence of the divine attributes, like the atheist and divine who attack them. Now that he argues in some sort hypothetically, I agree. But that he argues in any sort like them, I deny. An hypothesis, which the phenomena contradict, or which is inconsistent even with one of them, is not admissible. An hypothesis which they all concur to establish, is scarce an hypothesis. The goodness of God required that this world should be made for the sake of man, and he only to be happy, is an hypothesis of the first kind. That the goodness of God did not require this, and that his wisdom required something else, since it appears in his works that something else has been done, and since his works which must be always conformable to his attributes can alone enable us to judge concerning these; this, I say, is scarce an hypothesis. It is founded in fact, and is agreeable to our clearest and most distinct ideas. The atheist and the divine argue, from what they do not know, against what they do know; and in order to make the imposition pass, they trifle grossly between two methods of reasoning. One proves *à posteriori* that there is a first intelligent cause of all things. The other supposes it. After this, they attempt to prove *à priori* that there is a necessary connection between the wisdom and power of this Being, and his goodness and justice, which are, they say, in him, the very same that they are in our ideas. After this, they return again to the former method, and attempt to prove *à posteriori* that he is neither good nor just. The theist employs no such artifice. He reasons uniformly, from the works of God to his existence and his attributes: and reasoning in this manner he raises no objection to either, and is able to defend both.

I have spoken often of the pride of man, as the cause of many errors in philosophy, and especially in the first philosophy. It has no doubt a share in determining the atheist to the opinions

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that have been mentioned. But the atheist has another motive. His great aim is to free his mind from the belief that there is any Supreme Being. He struggles hard against demonstration, and catches at every hypothesis that may give him a pretence to doubt. Such a pretence he finds in that which assumes notions of the moral attributes of God, and of his designs in favor of man, and then opposes the phenomena to these notions. He has, on this occasion, the very singular advantage we have observed, that many of his adversaries agree with him in the premises, help him to establish them, and defend the cause of theism very ill against his conclusions afterwards. Divines, who do in effect no less than betray this cause to him, have likewise their private motive. They are unwilling to lower, on any account, their notions of human worth and importance, or of the designs of God in favor of man; and for that reason, since these notions cannot be maintained on the appearances of things that are, they have endeavored, in all ages, and in all religions, to maintain them on the supposition of things that may be: and the whole force of human imagination has been employed to soothe human pride. Much of what the pagans advanced hypothetically to keep up these notions, in opposition to universal experience, is indeed no longer hypothetical; since it has been admitted into Christianity. It is not hypothetical, I mean, when it is considered as a matter of revelation; for it is as hypothetical as ever, when it is considered as an object of reason. Let us leave it then respectfully to revelation, which is sufficient, or nothing can be so, to support it. Let us not employ our reason about things which she must either disown, or prostitute herself to maintain. Let us not employ her to multiply, or to improve hypotheses. Let us employ her in a manner to want none: and that we shall do effectually, if we keep her within those bounds which God has prescribed, by revealing in his works so much and no more of natural theology, and of natural religion, as he thought it necessary for us to know.

These precautions are the more fit to be taken, because though our religion forbids pride, and teaches humility, yet the whole system of it tends to inspire the former into all those who are not able to discern the consistency of particular precepts and of the system, which I presume that very few are. According to this system, man was not only made in the image of God, but the world and he were so made that his happiness seemed to be the final cause of the whole. He fell, indeed, from this state; but God, who suffered him to fall, rather than to restrain him in the exercise of his free will, determined instantly to raise him again, by the sacrifice of his own Son: whilst he abandoned myriads of fallen angels to the fatal consequences of their revolt,

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without any hopes of redemption. Is it possible to conceive higher notions of a created being, than these revealed truths must inspire? Plato asserted, on his exalted notions of the Supreme Being, that immortality was communicated by a sort of physical necessity to every creature that this Being himself created. Christian philosophers might be led more easily from the exalted notions of human nature, which these revealed truths inspire, to imagine that happiness was to be communicated by a sort of moral necessity to such a creature as man. Allow me one instance more. The Israelites were one of the least, and least worthy nations of the earth. Yet, God chose them, according to the same system, by a wonderful predilection for his favorite people, preferred them to all the people of the earth, and assigned them a country flowing with milk and honey. May not Christian philosophers have been led, by this example, to believe that God preferred mankind to all other intellectual creatures, and made a particular world for them, as he assigned a particular country to the Israelites? The facts, though received in theology, are not, indeed, applicable to philosophy. But when the mind is once tinctured by them, and a habit contracted of reasoning from them, any thing, that appears analogous to them, will be the more easily admitted.

XLVI.

The confederacy between atheists and divines appears to have been carried very far, by what has been said already. I have chosen in the reflections that have been made to account for the physical and moral evil that is in the world, and to defend the attributes of God, to go up to the source of all the false reasoning about them, rather than to insist on the topics that are commonly employed: and I hope, that the method I have taken is not the worse for being shorter, plainer, and less metaphysical. I must confess that I do not see how the cause of God can be effectually pleaded on this head any other way. But there is another head, on which it must be pleaded likewise; for the antitheistical confederacy does not end here. Lest the bare existence of evil should not afford the atheist color enough to deny the being of God, nor the divine a sufficient foundation whereon to erect, by the seeming authority of reason, that system of another world, which is, and always has been, of great advantage to him in this, they proceed to consider these evils in the distribution of them. The supposed injustice of this distribution has been ever in their mouths a subject of accusation, not to say of invective, against the providence of God: and they have been

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heard with partiality of two kinds, that of love, and that of aversion, in their favor. The good that happens to themselves, and to those with whom they are intimately connected, by sentiment, by interest, and often by both, is an object of one partiality among men. The evil, that happens to these, is an object of the other. The order is reversed, when persons we disapprove, or who stand in opposition to our sentiments or interests, are concerned. We hate the good, and we love the evil that happens to them. Great advantage has been taken of these natural dispositions to attack successfully the divine providence in human opinion. But here, indeed, the alliance between the atheist and the divine breaks off. The former concludes directly, that there is no God. The latter, after all he has done to favor this opinion indirectly, maintains still that there is one. How well the premises common to both, and their opposite conclusions are founded, let us examine. I fear that the atheist will appear, to that reason to which they both appeal, more consistent in his absurdity than the divine.

I think I have said, that artificial theology betrays the cause of God, how sincerely and how piously soever some of the professors of it may direct their intentions; and if I have said so, I shall not recall my words. If these men had left the atheists to assert alone, both vainly and foolishly, that divine goodness required the world should be made for the sake of man, and that God could have no other motive to create him, except that of communicating happiness to him, they might have defended this goodness sufficiently, as I hope it has been shown, and the divine justice too, as I hope it will be shown. They would have had no after-game to play, nor any contradictions to reconcile. The Stoics would not have been obliged to deny that to be evil, which they and every one else felt to be evil; nor the Christians to rest their defence on this proposition, that the first designs of God were disappointed by the fall of man, which cannot be conceived by reason, and which the atheist will not admit on the authority of revelation, or rather of a moral, philosophical, Egyptian allegory. But when they reasoned on the same principles, as the atheist reasoned, down to his conclusion exclusively, they left themselves no pretence for not concurring in the same conclusion but that of an hypothesis, and of an hypothesis which cannot, if it is admitted, effectually discharge the goodness, nor justice of God at the tribunal of reason. Thus it seems plain to me, that they betray the cause of God; for they undermine it; and if the hypothesis fails, that truth which was raised on demonstration fails with it, or totters on so precarious a support.

To such a risk at least does artificial theology, as it is employed in this case, expose the first principle of all religion; and

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we may apply to the schools that teach it, what Aristo of Chios said of some schools of philosophy. As caution was to be used lest men should go debauched out of the school of Aristippus, or morose out of that of Zeno, so caution should be used lest men go infidels out of the schools of Christianity. A few reflections will show that the risk I mention is not imaginary, but very real. No doctrines were ever inculcated more strongly on the minds of men, nor enforced by more authority than those of a future state. The institutors of religions, and the priests of these religions, were careful to establish and to maintain them in belief. They excited devotion, multiplied observances, and increased offerings. By them, the religious society has governed principally in all ages;* and if the priests of Egypt undertook to conduct men in the way of the gods, in the difficult road, in the ineffable paths, and through the brazen gates that lead to the mansions of the blessed, we may quote priests in the pale of Christianity, at this time, who undertake to save men from hell, to deliver them from purgatory, and to conduct them to heaven through the gates whereof St. Peter has the keys, as well as others who make some of the same pretensions, and who scruple not to declare, that if this doctrine be taken away, all difference between good and bad is taken away, and there is no such thing as religion left. To this authority we must add that of legislators and magistrates, who have for political purposes authorised the same doctrines, solemnised them by religious institutions, like those of the Eleusinian mysteries, confirmed them by laws, and set education, the great nurse of theological opinions, on their side. These are great advantages, and yet we do not find that this doctrine ever had an effect suitable to them, or to the importance of it. Remote considerations, though they are believed, have not indeed the same influence that immediate objects have. But they have an influence proportionable to the belief of them; and they must have this influence, especially in a case like this, where the punishments held out are unavoidable, and no man can hope, as every man does in all other cases, to escape them.

I do not say, that to believe a future state is to believe a vulgar error: but this I say, it cannot be demonstrated by reason; it is not in the nature of it capable of demonstration, and no one ever returned that irremeable way to give us an assurance of the fact. It was, therefore, originally a hypothesis and it may, therefore be a vulgar error. It was taken upon trust by the people who first adopted it, and made prevalent by art and industry among the vulgar who never examine, till it came to be doubted,

* Euseb. Præp. Evan. l. ix, c. 10.

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disputed and denied by such as did examine. It was made like many other opinions that had no better foundations, subservient to philosophical systems, and political institutions. It was advanced in answer to the great atheistical argument, drawn from the prosperity of wicked men. It was applied to enforce human laws, by divine and temporary rewards and punishments, by the fear of others more grievous, and more lasting, to procure greater authority to governors and more submission from the governed. It was communicated from Egypt, the mother of good policy as well as of superstition, to Greece. The luxuriant imaginations of that people improved it, and the Mythologia de Inferis became a favorite theme of their poets, of Orpheus, of Homer and so downwards even to their dramatic writers. There seems likewise to have been a custom then, not very unlike to that which prevailed about two centuries ago in the Christian church generally and much later, I believe, in Spain, the custom I mean of acting mysteries. Such these representations were called by the heathens, and the same kind of religious fopperies retained the same name among Christians.

But that which gave the greatest credit to this doctrine, and spread it most, was the authority of Homer and Plato. The former was gravely quoted by philosophers, as a philosopher, a historian and a divine, and all as properly no doubt, as the latter. The Romans took this doctrine and these mysteries from the Greeks: and the Greeks carried them back, when they conquered Asia and Egypt, to countries from whence they received them. Homer and Plato were in the zenith of their glory at the time of Alexander's expedition, and they continued to be so, in the reigns of his successors. Whether the Jews who began about or a little before this time to have schools, and to engraft from foreign stocks on their own law, might not have taken the first hints of a future state from some of their neighbors, I know not. But it is most probable that this doctrine was not known, or at least not taught amongst them, till the disputes in their schools gave a rise to the sects of Sadducees and Pharisees in their church. The most considerable persons, the richest says Josephus, adhered to the Sadducees, who adhered so strictly to the law of Moses that they could not admit a doctrine whereof there appeared no traces in it, and, therefore, denied the resurrection. The Pharisees or the Separatists, on the other hand, were ready to admit things marvellous in doctrine, and superstitious in practice; to reconcile them, if they could, to the written, or to justify them by an oral law; for no expedient serves the purpose of innovators better than that of a blind tradition. All this was proper to strike the multitude: and the multitude followed the Pharisees. Thus the doctrine of a future state, and

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even of a transmigration of souls, slided into the system of Judaism before the coming of Christ: and yet they who adopted this doctrine then had no better authority for it than that of Egyptian priests, Greek poets, and Pythagorean and Platonic hypothesis.

True it is that the immortality of the soul, and future rewards and punishments, some parts of what philosophers and poets had imagined, were sanctified by revelation soon afterwards. Thus sanctified, they deserve our respect, and challenge the implicit belief of every Christian. Thus, and thus alone they are maintained in opinion, and not by the futile reasonings of divines with which we have to do here. These are called demonstrations by the men who make them, and who triumph in them as if they were sufficient of themselves and must convince by their own evidence. But the truth is, they would have little effect on the minds of men, if they did not pass for superabundant proofs of what is made certain by revelation, and if the respect that men pay to revelation did not screen these reasoners from being attacked so directly, and in so many ways as they would be otherwise, and as they deserve to be, for presuming to rest all religion both natural and revealed on their metaphysical refinements, and their abstract reasonings *à priori*.

The most zealous asserters of a Supreme Being, the warmest defenders of his providence, and they who were the most persuaded of the necessity of a religion to preserve morality, and the good order of civil government, were far from this presumption. Some of them rather hoped than believed the immortality of the soul; and if they admitted a future state, they laughed at the old women's tales, the *aniles fabulæ* of an hell and the furies. They either rejected the doctrine, or they admitted it by halves. It was not only problematical in the opinions of theistical philosophers, but it seems, in several instances, to have had little hold on vulgar opinion; notwithstanding the means that had been used to inculcate it. One instance, and a remarkable one it is, shall be given. Tully* in a public pleading, wherein we may assure ourselves that he was careful to let nothing fall, that might be an occasion of scandal by contradicting and ridiculing the religious established opinions, speaking of Oppianicus, who had been condemned only to banishment, and, after saying that he should have killed himself, adds—"nam nunc quidem" (Oppianicus was then dead in his exile) "quid tandem illi mali mors attulit? Nisi fortè ineptiis ac fabulis ducimur ut existimemus illum apud inferos impiorum supplicia perferre .... actum esse præcipitem in sceleratorum sedem atque regionem. Quæ si falsa

* Orat. pro A. Cluen.

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sint, id quod omnes intelligunt, quid ei tandem mors eripuit præter sensum doloris?"

The use I make of this deduction is to show that the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, having been precariously established, and neither generally nor entirely believed by those who believed the existence of God on better foundations, there is a real danger to this first principle of all religion arising from the hypothesis against which I contend. Reason, experience and self-consciousness prove to me that a man may be thoroughly convinced, that there is a Supreme and self-existent Being of infinite power and wisdom; without subscribing to such notions of his moral attributes as divines would impose, or believing them any more capable than himself, of determining what these attributes required that God should do. But I can easily conceive, at the same time, that by eloquent discourses on the dignity of human nature, and the misery of human kind, by the cajolement of appeals to his passions and to his senses, this man may be induced to think that the misery of mankind overbalances their happiness in general;* and that in particular the criminal have many times the lot of the innocent, and the innocent that of the criminal: from whence he may conclude, that God is an unjust and cruel Being, and deals unreasonably with his creatures unless he has given them immortal souls, and there be another world he makes proper amends to the good, at least for what they have suffered in this. The man is brought to the very brink of the precipice. He cannot believe a God unjust, cruel, unreasonable; but he may find it as difficult to believe a God who acts against his attributes, and the perfections of his nature, in one system, only to have a reason the more for acting agreeably to them in another. In a word, he may be led by theology, if he does not start back and revert to his former ways of thinking, from theism into atheism. Des Cartes and his followers have been justly censured for resting the truth of God's existence on their favorite proof, drawn from the idea which they assume that the mind can frame of an all-perfect Being, and neglecting or even rejecting every other. Divines are justly liable to the same censure; for though they admit all the proofs that establish this great truth, yet they rest the validity of them ultimately on the hypothesis here mentioned, and expose such as cannot take this hypothesis for a demonstration, to the danger of mistaking the demonstrations for hypotheses.

* Relig. of Nat. delineated p. 205, et seq.

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XLVII.

This danger, great as it is, appears to such a divine as Clarke, or is represented by him, to be none at all. He who does not believe the moral attributes of the Supreme Being, to be just such as the doctor conceives them, and as essential to the divine nature as the natural attributes, has the doctor's consent to believe no God at all. This is the angular stone of artificial theology. Grant to the divine that these attributes and the eternal reason of things are such as he conceives them to be, and he will raise whatever schemes he pleases of divine economy. He will show you what God was, and is obliged to do as creator and governor of the world,* and what he must do to correct his first plan, to set the disorders and inequalities of it right, and to make the whole design appear at its consummation, what it does not appear at present, a design worthy of infinite wisdom, justice and goodness. Refuse to grant what he assumes, and he proves nothing with all his pomp of argument, and airs of demonstration. This profane application and impudent abuse of reason is grown so common, that they who are guilty of it do not perceive it to be what it is; and that every little smatterer in artificial theology, who clambers up into a pulpit, talks of the nature, attributes and providence of the Supreme, ineffable, incomprehensible Being, with such assurance as would be unpardonable presumption in angels and archangels themselves.

How should it be less? How should finite measure infinite? God's manner of knowing is ours no more than his manner of being. At least, I think, that one of these propositions may be reduced, as well as the other, to absurdity. But if his manner of knowing could be supposed, without absurdity, the same, would it not be still absurd to suppose the objects of omniscience as confined, as the objects of human science? And yet they must be so, if the eternal reason of things, by which the divine wisdom conducts them all, be just the same as it appears to be to the understanding of every rational being, and if God appeals to man himself for his conduct towards man. When God communicates any knowledge to any of his creatures, it is such as he thinks necessary for them, and it is, therefore, communicated in a manner proportionable to their conceptions. Thus he has communicated to mankind in his works some knowledge of himself, more of the world they inhabit, and still more of their state, their duty, and their interest in it. What he has not given

* Dem. 131.

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them the means of knowing, according to their manner of knowing, they are ignorant of: and, therefore, though the particular reasons and final causes of some few things relatively to themselves, and to their system, are known to them, yet even these are in many more instances unknown, and the reasons relatively to God, for constituting these and all other things as they are constituted, can be known to God alone, who sees them intuitively in himself, who is in himself the eternal reason. They cannot be objects of human understanding; for they are not conceivable by human ideas: and it is impossible to hear men with patience, when they endeavor to palm upon us, most impertinently, their notions of glory and honor for instance, and to make them pass for the motives that determine God.

We receive ideas from sensation and reflection, and we frame others by the several operations of our minds about these. Our minds have no other objects when they exercise the power of thinking, whatever that be. These ideas do not go far into the extent of being, nor our power of thinking, by consequence: and even in this extent our most simple ideas are sometimes fallacious, our most complex ideas unsteady, and many of them imperfect and inadequate, confused and obscure. There is somewhat more. Our knowledge does not extend even to all our ideas. Let me borrow two examples from Mr. Locke. "We have the ideas of a square, a circle, and equality, and yet shall never be able, perhaps, to find a circle equal to a square, and to know certainly that it is so. We have the ideas of matter and thinking, but possibly shall never be able to know whether any mere material being thinks or no." In like manner, and far more strongly, it may be said, that supposing us to have ideas of divine wisdom, goodness and justice, there will be various phenomena still, whereof we may have very clear and distinct ideas, and wherein we shall never be able to discover how wisdom coincides with goodness or justice, nor be able to make the application of the phenomena to the attributes. Thus the case would stand, supposing our ideas of these attributes in God as adequate as our ideas of a square, a circle, equality, matter, and thought. But it grows much stronger, when we consider how inadequate our ideas of these attributes must necessarily be, not only on account of the infinite distance between the divine and human nature, but on account of the numberless and to us unknown relations, respectively to all which the divine providence acts: which, if we did know them, we should be unable to compare, and in which, therefore, the harmony of divine perfections would not be discernible by us. Upon the whole matter, we may conclude, safely from error, and in direct opposition to Clarke, that goodness and justice in God cannot be conceived,

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without manifest presumption and impiety, to be "the same as in the ideas we frame of these perfections, when we consider them in men, or when we reason about them abstractly in themselves; but that in the Supreme Governor of the world they are something transcendent, and of which we cannot make any true judgment, nor argue with any certainty about them."

Thus I think, and if I wanted any authority to justify me I could find it in Dr. Barrow, and in St. Paul, whom I quote rather as a theologian than an inspired apostle, since we consider this whole matter on principles of reason and not of revelation. The former begins his sermon, on a text taken from the epistle of the latter to the Romans,* how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out? by observing that when God rejected the greatest part of his ancient people, for their refusal to embrace the gospel, and took the Gentiles into his favor; the advocates of Judaism argued against this proceeding from their ideas of wisdom, as well as of justice, and the other moral attributes. "This proceeding, they said, argued his former affection to them to have been misplaced. It impleaded his ancient covenant, and law, of imperfection. It supplanted his own designs. It unravelled all that he had been doing for many ages." St. Paul answered the advocates of Judaism by other arguments taken from "ideas of general equity, of the nature of God, of his attributes, of his relations to men, &c." But after he had steered his discourse, through all these rocks, which, I presume, would have been such for Clarke, if they were such for St. Paul, "he thought it safe to cast anchor, that is, to wind up the contest in this modest intimation, that, whatever he could say, might not perhaps exhaust the difficulty, nor void all scruple; and that, therefore, in this, and in all such cases, for entire satisfaction we should have recourse to the incomprehensible wisdom of God, who frequently in the course of his providence ordereth things in methods transcending our ability to discover or trace." St. Paul did not pretend that his manner of accounting, for rejecting the Jews and calling in the Gentiles, was infallible demonstration, certain and necessary, even as certain as the attributes of God. Much less did he affirm, that if his arguments, concerning the dispensations of providence, were not a demonstration, there was no demonstration of the being of God: and yet, surely, besides the difference between the apostle of the Gentiles, and the minister of St. James's, it could not be harder to prove, that the rejection of the Jews, and the vocation of the Gentiles were consistent with the goodness and justice of God, than to prove that a future state of rewards and punishments is

* C. ii. v. 33.

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necessary to justify his attributes, and to render his dispensations in this world consistent with them.

Dr. Barrow proceeds to consider several reasons, why we cannot clearly discern the entire congruity of providential dispensations to the divine attributes, as he expresses himself in another place. He could not cut the knot at once, nor bring the same charge as we have done directly against the presumption of men of his own order. He was a divine, he was a preacher, he was to keep up the cant of the pulpit. He gives, therefore, some reasons of a prudential kind, which may have determined God to veil his face with a cloud, and to wrap up his power in some obscurity, such for instance as these, that he may not confound our weak sight, that he may exalt our faith, that he may appear God indeed, or that we may be well assured concerning a future account, and forced in our thoughts to recur thither for a resolution of all emergent doubts and difficulties. Such flimsy stuff is a man like this obliged to vend, when he has put on a black gown and a band. But he lays his stress on another kind of reasoning, and such as is truly decisive. "As the dealings of very wise," he says, and we may add, of very just and good men, "are sometimes founded upon maxims, and admit justifications not obvious nor penetrable by vulgar conceit, so may God act according to rules of wisdom and justice which it may be quite impossible by our faculties to apprehend, or with our means to descry. As there are natural modes of being and operation . . . . so there may be prudential and moral rules of proceeding, far above our reach . . . . peculiar objects of divine wisdom, and not to be understood by any creature . . . . especially by creatures who stand in the lowest form of intelligence, one remove from beasts. . . . . In fine, those rules of equity and experience which we in our transactions with one another do use . . . . if they be applied to the dealings of God will be found very incongruous or deficient, the case being vastly altered from that infinite distance in nature and state between God and us, and from the immense differences which his relations towards us have from our relations to one another." These two great divines are, you see, on my side. They are both of the same opinion that Clarke censures: and if his censures were as just as they are dogmatical, St. Paul himself would be one of those men who take in reality the moral attributes of God entirely away, and who may on the same grounds deny his natural attributes.*

* Evid. p. 26.

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XLVIII.

It is time to have done with Clarke, especially since I leave this part of the argument in much better hands than my own, in those of Dr. Barrow and St. Paul, who deny to him the very principle from which, as from a common source, all the accusations of Providence are deduced by him, by many other divines, and by the whole tribe of atheists. I proceed to take notice of another writer, and to examine another of those assumptions which are employed by these men, whether divines or theists, to maintain their charge. That we are very incompetent judges of the moral attributes of God and of the eternal reason of things; that it is unpardonable presumption in us to pronounce what both or either of them required that God should do in the original constitution of our system, or requires that he should do in the government of it; these truths, I say, are so evident, that he who denies them, does not deserve to be argued against any longer. "Quæ perspicua sunt longa esse non debent." The determination of them should in reason determine the whole dispute. Infinite wisdom and infinite power have made things as they are: how goodness and justice required that they should be made, is neither *coram judice*, nor to any rational purpose to inquire. For greater satisfaction, however, it may not be amiss to show that neither the state of mankind in this life, in general, nor the lot of good and bad men, in particular, are such as they have been represented to serve the purposes of some persons; and that if they were such, the hypothesis of a life to come would not restore by reason the goodness and justice, which these men endeavor to destroy by appeals to reason and to passion.

The solemn author of the Religion of Nature Delineated, whom Clarke had in his eye perhaps, when he described his fourth sort of theists, whether this treatise had been then published or not, places himself on the same bench with Minos. Minos was the son of Jupiter, and the disciple of his father. So Plato calls him, in order to insinuate, as I believe, that nothing less than the wisdom of the Supreme Being was sufficient for the task assigned to this infernal judge. But I think, on recollection, that I must recall my words, and say that Wollaston places himself far above Minos. He judges God as well as man. Departed souls appear at the tribunal of the other, where they are punished for the evil they have done, or recompensed for the evil they have suffered, in this world. But he erects this court of judicature, establishes the general laws of it, as he judges the perfec-

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tions of the divine nature required that they should be established, and distinguishes, and weighs the kinds of happiness, or misery, that fall to the share of different men. Clear, and mixed happiness, avoidable, and unavoidable misery in the whole, or avoidable so far that the creature would choose rather to bear the remainder than miss the proportion of happiness: all which must come into consideration with the good and the evil men have done, at that judgment seat, where they are to be tried after death for what they have done in life.

In his attempt to prove, from the nature of an all-perfect Being, that God created the human soul immortal, because the mortality of it does not consist with reason, this author has the temerity to assert that he who says the contrary, must say in consequence either that God is unreasonable, unjust,* and cruel, or that no man has a greater share of misery unavoidable than of happiness. Nay further, the existence of an all-perfect Being depends so much, according to this theist, on the hypothesis of a future state,† that one single instance of unfortunate virtue and of prosperous wickedness in this world would be to him a sufficient argument for such a state. His reason is, that God cannot be unjust nor unreasonable in any one instance, which is undoubtedly true. But on this supposition he would be so in one instance, if there was no future state. One instance of these kinds, therefore, would have been to Wollaston a demonstration against the existence of an all-perfect Being, without the hypothesis of such a state. This is strange theism. Artificial theology is neither more dogmatical, nor more absurd: and the belief of God's existence hangs by a twine in both.

To support this hypothesis, he gives a most exaggerated description of the misfortunes to which particular men are liable in this world, and a very ridiculous as well as exaggerated description of the general, and the usual state of mankind; both which are assumed to be inconsistent with the idea of a reasonable cause. Let us consider the last first, as the natural order seems to require. Whilst the Clarkes and Wollastons of the age accuse the providence of God by arguments drawn from his nature, and from the eternal reason of things, both as imperfectly known to them as to you and me; let us defend this providence by arguments drawn from the nature of man, and the actual constitutions of the world, both equally well known to them and to us. Instead of hearkening to them, let us hearken to God, who speaks to us in his works; and instead of pronouncing what it was right for him to do, believe all he has done, for that very reason, right. Let us be prepared to meet with several appear-

* p. 200. † p. 205.

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ances, which we cannot explain, nor therefore reconcile to the ideas we endeavor to form of the divine perfections. But let us remember too that as the pretended science of the men, against whom we dispute, exposes them to error, as they render the great truths of theism doubtful, or at least perplexed by blending them up in an imaginary scheme of divine economy; so we may be secure from error by a modest avowal of ignorance, where human knowledge ceases: and as the imperfections of created beings prove them to be created, not self-existent, so the very deficiencies of the knowledge we have will be so many proofs of its truth. They must be necessarily such; for if it be true that infinite wisdom and infinite power created, and govern the universe, it cannot but follow that some of the phenomena may be proportionable, and that others must be disproportionable to our, and to every other finite understanding.

XLIX.

Having premised what I thought proper in this place, I observe, that the representation made of the general state of mankind, proves nothing, or proves too much. It proves nothing if a gradation of animal beings appeared necessary or fit in the divine ideas, that is, to speak less Platonically and more rationally, to the supreme or divine reason and intention; for in that case why should not we be the creatures that we are? It proves or attempts to prove too much, if it be intended to prove that there is, or that there should have been no such chain of being; for as we see that there is one almost from nonentity up to man, and have the most probable reasons to persuade us that it continues up to natures infinitely below the divine but vastly superior to the human; so there is surely no metaphysical nor theological presumption mad enough to assert that we are capable of knowing what the constitution, order and harmony of a universe require.

But now, whether such a gradation of being goes through the whole universe, or whether it be confined to our planet and stops at man, as the ignorance and pride of ancient philosophers induced them to believe, why is not the general state of mankind consistent with the idea of a reasonable cause? This reasonable cause may have produced such creatures as we are either relatively to that chain whereof we make a necesary link, or independently of it, and on other motives at which it is impossible we should even guess. When objections are made to such things as appear inconsistent with the perfections of an all-perfect Being in the Bible, the divine's answer is that of St. Paul, "O altitudo! The same divine objects to the works of God, and

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will not be answered by the same exclamations. My ignorance is made a sufficient reason for submitting implicitly to whatever I find in this book, as agreeable to the perfections of the Deity; and yet my ignorance is not allowed to be a reason for submitting in the same manner to whatever I find in the book of nature that God has actually done, as agreeable to these perfections; This may be called very justly theological effrontery in the divine; and it is at least as absurd in the theist to ask, whether the conditions of humanity, the various objects which men pursue, and the various scenes of their lives from the cradle to the grave, compose an end worthy a first cause perfectly reasonable? The learned author might have asked with far less impropriety, whether the lowest employments, to which legislators and magistrates subject some of the persons they govern in political societies, compose an end worthy of them? The answer would be, that considered by themselves, they do not, but that considered as parts of a general system, wherein the most minute are necessary to make the whole complete, they do: and that even considered by themselves, they are worthy at least of the persons to whom they are assigned.

In what I have written to you about human knowledge, I have insisted on one observation, which I will recall, and apply to the present case. The present case will justify the observation, and both together will discover very clearly the principal source from which all the perplexity, and all the tedious disputes concerning the origin of evil, and the supposed unjust dispensations of Providence, as well as most other metaphysical and indeterminable questions, have arisen. The synthetical method of reasoning by arguments *à priori*, that is by arguments deduced from principles assumed to be evident, is very commodious for many philosophical and theological purposes. But it may lead us imperceptibly into error, and we can never be sure that it leads us to truth, unless these principles are self-evident, or unless their evidence be demonstrated by the analytical method, that is, by argumemts *à posteriori*, that is, by tracing it up from the known phenomena. Now, it happens unfortunately for truth, that philosophers and divines catch at certain principles through levity, through a too implicit confidence, or through design, and argue dogmatically from them in the synthetical method without a due regard to the analytical. Thus, for instance, the wisdom of God does not appear alike in all the phenomena; but, as far as we can discover, it appears in the greatest and the least to our astonishment, and the proofs of it multiply in an exact proportion to our discoveries, whilst no one of these can be strained into a repugnancy to it, for if any of them could, the case would be altered extremely. This wisdom, therefore, is established by

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the analytical method, and we may reason safely from our ideas of it in the synthetical. But the same cannot be said of the moral attributes, which we ascribe to the Supreme Being, according to our ideas of them. The superiority we have over the rest of the animals, that are our fellow inhabitants of this world, which is imaginary, perhaps, in some respects, and real, without doubt, on the whole, and several particular phenomena, wherein virtue is rewarded and vice punished, give us these ideas. Now, whether the phenomena that give them, even those wherein the final causes are the most apparent, and the most immediately relative to man, are to be deemed effects of the divine goodness and justice, in any other sense than some of the same and several others are to be deemed effects of the divine goodness to the several species of animals; or whether they are all effects of the divine wisdom exerting itself in every part relatively to the whole, may be disputed. But it cannot be disputed, and all sides agree, that many of the phenomena are repugnant to these ideas of goodness and justice. They, therefore, who proceed on these principles, that goodness in God is just what we conceive it to be in our dealings with one another and in our abstract notions of it, and that his justice is the same, that he made the world for the sake of man, that he made man only to communicate happiness to him, and that every one, who acts in contradiction to this happiness, must be rigorously punished by God himself, are so far from demonstrating, that they have not the merit of framing a good hypothesis; since no hypothesis, which is contradicted evidently by any oue of the phenomena, can be received as such; and since it is in vain that they endeavor to rectify one by another, and to maintain the second by the very proofs that destroy the first. If the first fails, the second cannot stand; and he who expects to be believed, when he asserts what the phenomena can neither depose for, nor against, because he finds no other way to maintain what he had asserted in opposition to them, expects a great deal more than reason will grant him.

What has been said seems to be extremely plain: and they would conclude in this manner on any other occasion, who are not ashamed to do the very contrary on this. By setting themselves free from the restraints of the analytical method, these reasoners *à priori* resemble very much one sort of madmen. Some of these are so very mad that they lose all use of their reason, and are as little able to deduce consequences as they are to establish principles. Others, again deduce consequences, and argue very justly, but are still mad; because they reason from principles that have no appearance of reality out of their own overheated and disordered imaginations. You will find in-

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stances of this kind without the trouble of going to Bedlam. You will find them in every form of life, even among those who are reputed sober and wise, and who really are so, except on some one particular subject. But you will find them principally in colleges and schools where different sects have rendered this sort of madness, which is occasional elsewhere, both epidemical and traditional. Few have been mad like Don Quixote, whilst multitudes have been, and are as mad in different walks of science, as the Danish cabbalist who instructed Borri. The man had great parts, was learned, was devout. He reasoned extremely well; but he reasoned like the rest of his sect on the supposition of an elementary people and on other cabbalistical principles. Atheists seem to me to deserve a place among the first sort of madmen, and I apprehend that many divines and theists ought to be ranked among the second.

They who approach the charm, are exposed to the enchantment. How should they escape who are bred up in it? I call it an enchantment, and I think, that men who have great strength of genius, and great warmth of imagination, are often the most liable to be affected by it. The analytical method is the surest road to truth, but it suits neither the purpose nor the temper of such philosophers. Where it may carry them they know not. It will carry them to truth, if it be well pursued, but it may carry them to truth that is inconsistent with the doctrines they are engaged by prejudice, or interest to maintain; and accordingly we see them fly off from it, like men who are afraid of their guide. It is troublesome and tedious; for it requires often a difficult and long induction of particulars: and they are in haste to arrive at science, or what they take for science. It stops, in many cases, short, and disappoints their curiosity. They scorn to stop where it stops; and, therefore, they take a bold leap, from certain ideas that seem to them clear and distinct, to the first principles of things, as Fontenelle says of Des Cartes, foolishly to be sure, since he intended to make his panegyric, and to give him the preference to Newton.

All this may be applied to the persons we speak of here; and there is no subject, on which the enchantment has had so much force, nor has prevailed so long as on this of the origin of evil, of the moral attributes of God, and of the dispensations of Providence. This was a chaos of metaphysical notions three thousand years ago, and it is so still. Some very able writers have endeavored to account for the origin of evil consistently with the received notions of the moral attributes of God, and of his design in creating man; but I doubt that the two famous questions are still unanswered by them. "If there is a God infinitely good as well as powerful, how comes it that there is any such

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thing as evil in the world? If he is infinitely just, how comes it that the virtuous have a share and sometimes the greatest of this evil?" The hypothesis of two principles, which had been invented by the most ancient of the eastern philosophers, and was revived by Manes, and others, contained many absurdities, and did not solve the difficulty, since it might be asked, why did the good God create man at all, if he could not create and govern him independently of the evil god? The hypothesis of the fall of man, for such it is under a philosophical consideration, will serve the purpose as little; since it is impossible to render that assumed indulgence of God to the free-will of man, which defeated the original design of God, plunged man into a state of misery as soon as he was created, and obliged the divine goodness to have recourse to the expedient of a redemption by the blood of his own Son—since it is impossible, I say, to render this agreeable to our ideas of goodness or even of wisdom.

The first of these hypotheses has been exploded long ago. The second must be defended as well as it can, since it is made the foundation of the Christian system. But, however the introduction of evil may be accounted for by this sacred tradition, and by much ingenious argumentation to the reason of mankind; every divine, and several theists, endeavor to account for the existence and distribution of it by another hypothesis, which is as ancient as either of the former, and which mnst have been invented, since it was not revealed to the Egyptians, and other people, any more than to the Israelites, not only for a political, but for a philosophical purpose, and to serve for an answer to the two atheistical questions. It is with this hypothesis, considered independently of revelation, that we have to do here. We are to examine whether it reconciles the phenomena to the ideas we have of goodness and justice, by assuming that this world is nothing more than the porch or entry into another.*

L.

As the men who maintain this hypothesis neglect the phenomena when they pretend to determine the moral attributes of God, so they overstrain them with much affectation and unfairness when they pretend to demonstrate a future state. The author of the Religion of Nature Delineated, that I may mention one particularly, does this in such a manner that his exaggerations become burlesque.† According to him, "the general state of mankind is scarce consistent with the idea of a reasonable

* Rel. of Nat. p. 207. † Ibid. p. 206, 207, 209.

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cause, because we are born with the labor of our mothers; because we are liable to hunger, thirst, heat, cold, and indispositions of various kinds; and because one generation drops off, and another springs up, that is, because as we are born, so we die. Children, we trifle away our time at play; or we are sent to school, and submitted to discipline. Men, we are exposed to difficulties, and surrounded with cares. There are inhuman or vicious husbands, false or peevish wives, refractory or unhappy children. Many can never obtain a comfortable livelihood; many of those that do, break; and even when their affairs go on prosperously, their families increase, and new occasions of solicitude are introduced by this increase. Under such grievances we lie during the best part of life, and when we grow old we grow infirm. In short, physical and moral evil intermixed with a few transitory and uncertain enjoyments, not worth enjoying, make up the whole system of our lives, at the last stage of which, if we are not taken away sooner by death, fainting, tottering, and bending to the earth, we fall into the grave of ourselves." Such, and far more miserable, (for I omit among others those who labor under incurable distempers, and who subsist by begging, borrowing, or shifts as bad as these,) is the state of mankind represented to be; after which the pathetic writer concludes, and must man end here? Is this the period of his being? Is this all? The author I quote is so transported by the torrent of his eloquence, and by such reflections as these, that he raises in his own mind what I think he will raise in that of no sober reader, a sort of indignation against the state wherein Almighty God has placed us, and against the order of his providence. On this he grounds an expectation of life and immortality in a better state, and, on this expectation, an argument that there will be such a state.

In this rapture he retires to some solitary walk, and there far from noise, perhaps, but certainly not free from prejudice, he meditates for our instruction. "He thinks himself sure that he is above lifeless matter, above the vegetative tribe, and above the sensitive animals that he sees. He has not only immediate sensations, but ideas of a higher order. He can make excursions into futurity; he had almost said, that he could, by strict thinking, get into another world beforehand. Can he be made capable of such great expectations only to be disappointed at last? Can he have such overtures of immortality, if, after all, there is no such thing? He makes great improvements in knowledge which he has often no opportunity of showing here. Must they not be preparations for another world, wherein he may show them? Can the author of his reasoning faculties be himself so unreasonable as to give them to no purpose? By the exaltation

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of his reason, and by the practice of virtue, he approaches to a higher manner of being, and tastes already something spiritual, and above this world. Must his private acts of religion be all lost? Can God have so little regard for him who has so much for God?"

In this specimen, which is very faithfully extracted, we have an example of the second sort of madness mentioned above.—The man who wrote all this nonsense was a man of parts, of learning, a philosopher, and a geometrican. But he made one mistake in the delirium of metaphysics. Instead of reasoning about a creature of God's, he reasoned about one of his own creation. When these learned lunatics conceive men to be nearly what they are, they pull down the divinity nearly to the same level, and frame their notions of God's proceedings with them on those of their proceedings with one another. When they think more worthily of the Supreme Being, and raise their ideas of an all-perfect nature as high as they are able, they raise their ideas of the human nature in a certain proportion to these; so that God and man are, in all their reasonings, within degrees of comparison. Thus Mr. Wollaston has done in his truths relating to the Deity, and in those relating to a private man. He raises our conceptions in the first, as high as they can be raised, and then loses himself, and leaves his reader to be lost, in the incomprehensibillity of the divine nature, as they must needs be He does not, indeed, flatter the human in the second as grossly as some writers, who endeavor to impose on us against the intuitive knowledge which every one may have of himself; but he insists so much on the spirituality and immortality of the soul, and on the unsuitableness of the condition to the importance of mankind, that he gives ground sufficient to stand upon to those fulsome panegyrists of humanity, who consider man as the image of God, the final cause of the creation, and the principal object among created beings, even above angels, of the divine care and solicitude.

But, after all their endeavors to make of man a being superior to the whole animal kind, rather than a superior species of the same kind, man will appear what he really is to every unprejudiced miud. In vain will they endeavor to persuade any such that the natural state of mankind is unnatural, if I may say so; that is, a state neither agreeable to the nature of God himself, nor to that nature wherewith he has dignified man. In vain will they endeavor to persuade any such that the conditions of humanity are imperfections in the system; and that, in the works of God, as in those of men, whatever falls short of the idea of the workman, or is not proportionate to the value of the materials he prepares in one essay, may be rectified in another instance.

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It is not only true but obvious, that man is connected by his nature, and, therefore, by the design of the Author of all nature with the whole tribe of animals, and so closely with some of them that the distance between his intellectual faculties and theirs, which constitutes as really, though not so sensibly as figure, the difference of species, appears, in many instances, small, and would, probably, appear still less, if we had the means of knowing their motives, as we have of observing their actions. The connection of all animal, and, by consequence, of human with vegetable life is more remote. But there is such a connection; and it will be manifest to him who considers how vegetables are produced, how they grow up, how they ripen, flourish for a time, wither and die, how many wants they have, such as nourishment, culture and shelter, for instance, as well as to how many distempers and injuries they are exposed, in all which circumstances their connection with the animal kind is too apparent to be denied. Though man is an animated material, being capable of beginning motion, and of many other modifications of thought, both single, and in series; yet, however these mental powers were communicated to him, and in degrees still more imperfect to other animals, his system and theirs are founded alike in mere matter, and when we look at one another, the first ideas we receive are those of extension and figure, the parts of which, like those of any other clod of earth, are liable to separation, and to a dissolution of the form. Nay, there is a further analogy between animated and inanimated bodies. The former have, by instinct, a sort of moral gravitation to one another, by which they adhere together in society. I will not apply instinct to the latter; but this I may say, that a force as unknown as instinct, produces a gravitation of the several parts of matter to each other, and keeps them together in a kind of physical society.

The whole world, nay the whole universe is filled with beings which are all connected in one immense design. The sensitive inhabitants of our globe, like the *dramatis personæ*, have different characters, and are applied to different purposes of action in every scene. The several parts of the material world, like the machines of a theatre, were contrived not for the actors, but for the action; and the whole order and system of the drama would be disordered and spoiled, if any alteration was made in either. The nature of every creature, his manner of being, is adapted to his state here, to the place he is to inhabit, and, as we may say, to the part he is to act. If man was a creature inferior or superior to what he is, he would be a very preposterous creature in this system. Gulliver's horses made a very absurd figure in the place of men, and men would make one as absurd in the place of horses. I do not think that philosophers

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have shown in every instance why every thing is what it is, and as it is, or that nothing could be in any one case otherwise than it is without producing a greater inconveniency to the whole than the particular inconveniency that would be removed. But I am sure this has been proved in so many instances, that it is trifling, as well as profane, to deny it in any. We complain often of our senses, and sometimes of our reasoning faculties. Both are defective, weak, fallible; and yet, if the former were more extensive, more acute, and more nice, they would not answer the purposes of human life, they would be absolutely inconsistent with them. Just so, if our reasoning faculties were more perfect than they are, the order of intellectual beings would be broken unnecessarily, and man would be raised above his proper form without any real advantage to himself, since the reason he has is sufficient for him in the state allotted to him; and since higher faculties, and greater degrees of knowledge would on one hand increase his presumption, and yet on the other would rather excite than sate his curiosity, by showing him more clearly the extent of his ignorance.

Wollaston pretends to reduce every one who does not adopt the hypothesis of rewards and punishments in a future state, to this dilemma; "no rational creature is unavoidably miserable, or God is an unreasonable and cruel being." But, in the first place, who told this writer, or how does he know that there are any rational creatures unavoidably miserable? The whole story of mankind tells him so, and his own senses show him that it is so, and on these supposed authorities he makes such a state of misery to be that of almost all mankind. I might have said of all mankind absolutely; for though he allows that some are more and some are less miserable than others: yet in the enumeration he makes of unavoidable human miseries he includes many that are unavoidable indeed, but that do not constitute misery, either when they come separately, or when several of them come together. They are inconveniences at most, to which every man is liable. Every man is liable to catch cold, and like other animals, to be afflicted with various bodily distempers. Every man, and he most, who is deemed commonly to be the furthest removed from misery, is exposed to cares, to troubles, to disappointments, &c. Our author is fond on this occasion of the word misery, it carries a stronger idea along with it, and serves the purpose of exaggeration better. But what is misery? Let us, who have no other purpose to serve than that of truth, determine our ideas with greater precision. As I take happiness to be a continued permanent series of agreeable sensations or of pleasure, so I take misery to be a continued permanent series of the contrary; and such misery has never been brought,

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I believe, on any man necessarily, and unavoidably, as a consequence of the general state wherein God has placed mankind.

Particular occasional evils, physical and moral, are consequences of this state, no doubt, and such as we are able to show that they could not be prevented in the best of all material systems. The course of things rolls on through a vast variety of contingent events, for such they are to our apprehensions, according to the first impression of motion given to it, and under the direction of a universal Providence. This perpetual flux, and the vicissitudes it creates, in what we call the fortune of men, bring along with them both good and evil. Human life is chequered variously with both; and as the good has often some alloy, so the evil is softened by many circumstances, even by habit, and above all, by hope, that cordial drop which sweetens every bitter potion, even the last.

The saying of the Epicureans is true of all sorts of evil. If it is violent, it spends itself, or it puts an end soon to him who suffers it. If it is moderate, it is tolerable, it may be compensated, or the sense of it may wear out. Thus a dancing, drunken, smoking revel makes ample amends to the savage for all the wants he has suffered, and for all the pains and perils to which he has been exposed. Thus the galley-slave sings whilst he is chained to an oar, and thus might they sing who worked in the golden mines of the Upper Egypt, and for whom as well as their relations and poor children, Mr. Wollaston is moved to so much compassion. I should wonder, when he was in Egypt, that he did not quote a tradition from the Bible as well as from Diodorus, if I did not consider that he gave probably more credit to the profane than to the sacred history, and lament the fate of the Israelites who were obliged to make bricks without straw, and whose backs were scourged by their task-masters. The real evils, that men suffer, are not in truth so great as they appear in these exaggerated representations of them, and very often, perhaps, to the eye of a spectator: nay, the greatest of them are not greater than those which men impose voluntarily on themselves, whilst they complain loudly of evils far less, which the conditions of humanity impose on them. I might bring examples from those who row in galleys, or dig in mines, for hire; from those who condemn themselves to pass their whole lives in austerities like the fathers of La Trappe, or in torments like the Faquirs of the east, on motives of superstition; from those in whom a turn of imagination can take off the fear of death, and make them court it before its time, like the followers of Odin, who sung the praise of it in their hymns, witness the ode of good king Lodbrog, and had no better a reason for it than the hope

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of drinking beer in the sculls of their enemies at the palace of Odin.

Thus do men frequently embrace, by choice, the very evils they complain of, when they happen to them in the usual course of things, and sometimes even death itself, for which they have, by nature, the strongest aversion. Thus too they devote their whole lives to real and constant misery, which is no part of the general natural state of mankind. In short, their greatest evils are from themselves, not from God, which might be shown in innumerable instances. True it is, that they are sometimes involved in general calamities, which they can neither foresee nor prevent, such as inundations, earthquakes, pestilences, and the entire devastations of kingdoms or provinces by savage and barbarous people, like the Huns of old, or the Spaniards in later ages. But these calamities are rare. They may be considered as chastisements; for chastisements are reasonable, when there are any to be amended by partaking in them, or by being, at least, spectators of them. They may be considered as the mere effects, natural, though contingent, of matter and motion in a material system, put into motion under certain general laws. If they are seen in the first light, they should teach mankind to adore, and to fear that Providence which governs the world by particular as well as general dispensations. If they are seen in the second, they should suggest some other reflections, which are not without their utility neither.

Necessary agents employ all their powers conformably to the laws of nature, in promoting the same end, that is, in carrying on the physical system. So rational agents should employ all their faculties in preserving the order of the moral system, which reason discovers to be their common duty, and reason and experience to be their common interest. There are great deviations in both, with a double difference relatively to the state of mankind. The former are wholly independent, the latter in great measure dependent on man, notwithstanding the strength of his passions, and the weakness of his reason. The former are not only rare, and the latter frequent; but the consequences of the latter become much more fatal to the happiness of mankind in general, than those of the former. From hence it results very evidently that the wisdom of God, which you may call his goodness, has given man by what is in his power very ample means to make himself amends for that which is out of his power. Atheists and divines find fault with the whole. They cannot, or they will not conceive, that the seeming imperfection of the parts is necessary to the real perfection of the whole. The entire scheme of the works of God must be altered to please them. Nothing, even inconvenient to these delicate persons,

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must be suffered in it. They must be physically invulnerable, and morally impeccable, or the divine providence must interpose continually to shield every particular man from evils of one sort, and to check him, like the demon of Socrates, when he is about to commit those of another. This is all they modestly require; and of the want of this they complain perpetually, as they pretend, the divine at least does so, that they have a right to do, because God appeals to man for the equity of his proceedings.

Let us be convinced, however, in opposition to atheists and divines, that the general state of mankind in the present scheme of Providence is a state not only tolerable, but happy. Without having Wollaston's balance, wherein he weighs happiness and misery even to grains and scruples, we may pronounce that there is much more good than evil in it; and prove what we pronounce even by his authority, and that of all those who deny it like him, if any such authority can be wanting. It is plain that every man has more good than evil in actual enjoyment, or in prospect, since every man prefers existing as he is to non-existence, and since none of them, not those who suffer the worst accidents in life, are willing to abandon it, and to go out of the state these declaimers represent to be so miserable. The proposition may be advanced thus generally, because there are very few examples to the contrary, and those are of men run mad by distemper, or made so by some prevailing enthusiasm. Neither will it avail to say that the desire of life and the fear of death are, one the greatest imperfection, and the other the greatest evil of our human state; since, whatever they are, and from whence soever they arise, they would lessen in all cases, and cease in many, if the condition of mankind were truly such as it is represented. What our author's circumstances were of any kind I am ignorant. But whatever they were, I am persuaded, you will be of my opinion, that any charitable person who had offered to cut his throat, in order only to deliver him from the miseries he complained of in such lamentable terms, would have been very ill received. But I hasten to wind up and conclude the hints, for they are no more, which occur to me, and which I think proper to give you concerning the general and usual state of mankind.

LI.

I say then, that if men come helpless into the world like other animals; if they require even longer than other animals to be nursed and educated by the tender instinct of their parents, and if they are able much later to provide for themselves; it is be-

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cause they have more to learn and more to do; it is because they are prepared for a more improved state and for greater happiness. Sense and instinct direct all animals to their several ends. Some of them profit more by experience, acquire more knowledge, and think and reason better than others both in different species and in the same. Man is at the head of these; he profits still more by experience, he acquires still more knowledge, he thinks and reasons better than all other animals; for he who is born too stupid to do so, is not a human creature: he sinks into an inferior species, though he be made after the image of man. Man is able by his intellectual superiority to foresee, and to provide more effectually against the evils that threaten him, as well as to procure to himself the necessaries, the comforts, and the pleasures of life. All his natural wants are easily supplied, and God has proportioned them to the abilities of those who remain in the lowest form of rational creatures. The Tartar under his tent, and the Savage in his hut, enjoys them. Such is the general state of mankind. Of what then do we complain? His happiness exceeds that of his fellow-creatures, at least as much as the dignity of his nature exceeds the dignity of theirs: and is not this enough?

We ought to think that it is enough: and yet God has done more for us. He has made us happy, and he has put it into our power to make ourselves happier by a due use of our reason, which leads us to the practice of moral virtue and of all the duties of society. We are designed to be social, not solitary creatures. mutual wants unite us: and natural benevolence and political order, on which our happiness depends, are founded in them. This is the law of our nature; and though every man is not able for different reasons to discern it, or discerning it to apply it, yet so many are able to do this that they serve as guides to the rest. The rest submit for the advantages they find in this submission. They learn by experience that servitude to law is real liberty, and that the regulation of pleasure is real happiness. Pleasures are the objects of self-love, happiness that of reason. Reason is so far from depriving us of the first, that happiness consists in a series of them: and as this can be neither attained nor enjoyed securely out of society, a due use of our reason makes social and self-love coincide, or even become in effect the same. The condition wherein we are born and bred, the very condition so much complained of, prepares us for this coincidence; the foundation of all human happiness; and our whole nature, appetite, passion, and reason concur to promote it. As our parents loved themselves in us, so we love ourselves in our children, and in those to whom we are most nearly related by blood. Thus far instinct improves self-love. Reason improves it farther. We love our-

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selves in our neighbors, and in our friends too, with Tully's leave; for if friendship is formed by a kind of sympathy, it is cultivated by good offices. Reason proceeds. We love ourselves in loving the political body whose members we are, and we love ourselves when we extend our benevolence to all mankind.

These are the genuine effects of reason, these are the purposes for which it was given us, and nothing more trifling, nor more absurd, can be found in the writings of those who have presumed to censure the providence of God, than what Tully puts into the mouth of Cotta, in the third book of the Nature of the Gods, on this occasion. "I know not," is this pontiff made to say, "whether it had not been better for mankind to have had no reasoning faculties at all, since they are hurtful to so many, and profitable to so few, than to have had them so bountifully and so profusely bestowed."* Foolish and profane! Fire serves for several necessary uses, among the rest to warm us, and sensitive experience teaches us to distinguish between warming and burning, in the manner and degree wherein we employ it. Shall we renounce the use of it, and complain that there is such an element, because it burns us when we employ it ill, or when we neglect, in employing it well, the precautions and attentions that are necessary? Just so (for we may transfer this material image to an intellectual subject, much more properly than such images are usually transferred to such subjects by metaphysicians) just so, I say, human reason is given for several necessary uses, and principally to lead us to all the happiness we are made capable of attaining, by a proper application of it, which rational experience is sufficient to teach us. This comparison is more just than that which Cotta makes, and Bayle has copied, of the Supreme Being to a physician, who prescribes wine to a patient that he knows will drink it too strong, and perish by the use of it. Neither the strength of our reason, nor the too frequent use of it, but the contrary, are to be apprehended: and if the sick man's wine must be mingled with water to do him good, reason, the medicina animi, must be employed pure and unmixed. The other similes, which these Academicians employ, are as impertinent as this, and might be shown very easily to be so, if it were worth our while. But no man, who is not already devoid of reason, will be induced by them to renounce this noble gift, wherein the dignity of our nature consists, because it becomes hurtful when we apply it ill; or through negligence, or through

* Haud scio an melius fuerit humano generi motum istum celerem cogitationis, acumen, solertiam, quam rationem vocamus, quoniam pestifera sit multis, admodum paucis salutaris, non dari omnino, quam tam munificé, et tam largé dari.

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affectation, or through design, even when we apply it well. It was applied rather impertinently than hurtfully, to maintain Stoical apathy; for it was not given to destroy, but to direct and govern the passions; to make them as beneficial as they are necessary in the human system; to make a Piso of a Catiline,* and a Brutus, I mean the first, of a Cæsar. But it was applied very hurtfully, indeed, and it is so still, by those who employ all the reason they have to corrupt the morals of men, to bribe, to seduce, to argue, to deceive, or to force them out of their properties, or their liberties and to make a whole community become the vassals of a faction of men, or of one man. This in politics. In religion it was applied very hurtfully, and it is so still by atheists and divines, whilst the former endeavor by sophism and declamation to censure the works of God, and the order of his providence, to destroy the belief of his existence, and to banish all sense of religion; and whilst the latter, who join very heartily in the same censure, would be thought to justify the divine attributes against the common accusation, and to promote the interests of religion by this justification.

A most unnecessary justification surely! if they did not make it necessary; since God leads us by the natural state, in which we stand at first, into the road of happiness, and leaves us to the conduct of a sufficient guide, that is, of our reason, afterwards. It would be false to say, as Seneca says, somewhere in one of the rants of the Portic, that we owe our virtue to ourselves, not to God. It would be equally false to say, that we owe our happiness to ourselves, not to God. But this may be said with truth that God, when he gave us reason, left us to our free-will to make a proper, or improper, use of it: so that we are obliged to our Creator for a certain rule and sufficient means of arriving at happiness, and have none to blame but ourselves, when we fail of it. It is not reason, but perverse will, that makes us fall short of attainable happiness. The rule is so certain, and the means so sufficient, that they who deviate from them are self-condemned at the time they do so; for he, who breaks the laws of nature, or of his country, will concur to preserve them inviolate from others. As a member of society, he acknowledges the general rules. As an individual, he endeavors to be a particular exception to it.—He is determined in both cases by self-love. That active principle, inflaming and inflamed by his passions, presses on to the apparent good which is the object of them: and if reason, a less active principle, which, instead of impelling, requires to be impelled, and to whom it belongs to be consulted in the choice, as well as in the pursuit, of an object, is called in, it is called in too

* Frugi.

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late, and is made the drudge of the will, predetermined by passion. Thus it happens, that self-love and social are divided, and set in opposition to one another in the conduct of particular men, whilst, in the making laws, and in the regulation of government, they continue to be the same. As long as they do so, the happiness of mankind is abundantly provided for and secured, in their several societies; and, notwithstanding the physical evils to which the members of these societies may stand sometimes exposed, every reasonable man, every man who is not a disciple of such a whining philosopher as Wollaston, nor such a presumptuous divine as Clarke, will confess that such a state is as happy not only as human eye ever saw, or human ear ever heard, but as the heart of man can conceive to belong to humanity; and much more happy than creatures, but one degree above those whom they despise, could expect to be.

It is true, indeed, that governments shift and change not only their administrations, but their forms. Good princes and magistrates carry on the work of God, and by making men better make them happier. When these are corrupt, the infection spreads. They corrupt the people, the people them; social love is extinguished, and passion divides those whom reason united. When the abuse is confined within certain bounds, the condition of many men may be happy, and that of all may be still tolerable: and when the abuse exceeds such degrees, and when confusion or oppression becomes intolerable, we are to consider that they who suffer deserve to suffer. Good government cannot grow excessively bad, nor liberty be turned into slavery, unless the body of a people co-operate to their own ruin. The laws, by which societies are governed regard particulars, and individuals are rewarded, or punished, by men. But the laws by which the moral as well as the physical world is governed, regard generals: and communities are rewarded or punished by God according to the nature of things in the ordinary course of his providence, and even without any extraordinary interposition. Look round the world ancient and modern, you will observe the general state of mankind to increase in happiness, or decline to misery, as virtue or vice prevails in their several societies. Thus the author of nature has been pleased to constitute the human system, and he must be mad who thinks that any of the atheistical, theological, or philosophical makers, and menders of worlds, could have constituted it better. The saying of Alphonsus, king of Castile, who found so many faults in the construction of the material world that he pronounced himself able to have given the supreme architect a better plan, has been heard with horror by every theist. Shall we hear without horror the men spoken of here, when they find fault with the moral, as well as physical

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plan, when they found accusations against the goodness, justice, and wisdom of God, merely on their pride, when they assume, on no other foundation, that man is or ought to have been the final cause of the creation, and rail as heartily at Providence as Plutarch represents Epicurus to have done; in short, when they go so far as to impute to God, the introduction or permission of those very evils which neither God is answerable for, if I may use such an expression, nor nature, nor reason, but our own perverse wills, and the wrong elections we make?

I cannot hear any part of this without horror; and therefore, if I had walked with Wollaston* in some retired field, my meditations would have been very different from his, more just, and more reverential towards the Supreme Being. I should have been very sure that neither lifeless matter nor the vegetative tribe have any reflex thoughts, nor any thoughts at all. I should have been convinced that the faculty of thinking is given to sensitive animals, as we call them, in a lower degree than to man. But I should not have been convinced that they have the power of exercising it in respect of present objects only. The contrary would appear to me, on some occasions, as manifest in them, or in some of them, as it appears on others, and on more, in the man who is born dumb. I should feel the superiority of my species, but I should acknowledge the community of our kind. I should rouse in my mind a grateful sense of these advantages above all others, that I am a creature capable of knowing, of adoring, and worshipping my Creator, capable of discovering his will in the law of my nature, and capable of promoting my happiness by obeying it. I should acknowledge thankfully that I am able, by the superiority of my intellectual faculties, much better than my fellow-creatures, to avoid some evils and to soften others, which are common to us and to them. I should confess that as I proved myself more rational than they by employing my reason to this purpose, so I should prove myself less rational by repining at my state here, and by complaining that there are any unavoidable evils. I should confess that neither perfect virtue nor perfect happiness is to be found among the sons of men: and that we ought to judge of the continuance of one, as we may judge of our perseverance in the other, according to a maxim in the ethics of Confucius; not by this, that we never fall from either, since in that sense there would be no one good nor no one happy man in the world; but by this, that when we do fall we rise again, and pursue the journey of life, in the same road. Let us pursue it contentedly, and learn that, as the softest pillow on which we can lay our heads has been said by Mon-

* Ibid. p. 209.

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tagne to be ignorance, we may say more properly that it is resignation. He alone is happy, and he is truly so, who can say, welcome life whatever it brings! Welcome death whatever it is! "Aut transfert, aut finit." If the former, we change our state, but we are still the creatures of the same God. He made us to be happy here. He may make us happier in another system of being. At least, this we are sure of, we shall be dealt with according to the perfections of his nature, not according to the imperfections of our own. Resignation in this instance cannot be hard to one who thinks worthily of God, nor in the other, except to one who thinks too highly of man. That you, or I, or even Wollaston himself, should return to the earth from whence we came, to the dirt under our feet, or be mingled with the ashes of those herbs and plants, from which we drew nutrition whilst we lived, does not seem any indignity offered to our nature, since it is common to all the animal kind: and he, who complains of it as such, does not seem to have been set, by his reasoning faculties, so far above them in life, as to deserve not to be levelled with them at death. We were like them before our birth; that is nothing. So we shall be, on this hypothesis, like them too after our death; that is nothing. What hardship is done us? None, unless it be a hardship, that we are not immortal, because we wish to be so, and flatter ourselves with that expectation. As well might that emperor of China have complained of his disappointment, when he imagined, he had bought immortality of a certain impostor, who pretended to give it, and then died. If this hypothesis were true, which I am far from assuming, I should have no reason to complain, though, having tasted existence, I might abhor non-entity. Since then the first cannot be demonstrated by reason, nor the second be reconciled to my inward sentiment, let me take refuge in resignation at the last, as in every other act of my life. Let others be solicitous about their future state, and frighten, or flatter themselves as prejudice, imagination, bad health, or good health, nay a lowering day, or a clear sunshine shall inspire them to do. Let the tranquillity of my mind rest on this immovable rock, that my future, as well as my present state, are ordered by an almighty and all-wise Creator; and that they are equally foolish, and presumptuous, who make imaginary excursions into futurity, and who complain of the present.

These reflections, on the general and usual state of mankind, may be carried much further, and more may be added. But these are sufficient; and I proceed to plead the cause of God, on another head, against the same confederates.

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LII.

If you improve in your own thoughts the hints dispersed in the precedent reflections, you, whose good understanding is undebauched by metaphysics, will see very evidently the truth of these two propositions. First, that, supposing the world we inhabit to be a scene of as many evils as it is represented to be, the arguments drawn from thence against the wisdom, or power, or goodness of God, are inconclusive. God is the Creator and governor of the universe, not of this world alone, a small and, probably, a very inconsiderable part of it: so that, if there was really more evil than good in this part, it would conclude nothing against the whole, wherein there might be still much more good than evil, nor, consequently, against the divine attributes. Secondly, that there is even in this world so much more good than evil, and the general state of mankind is so happy in it, that the exaggerated descriptions of a supposed contrary state would make no impression against these attributes, if men had not been induced to think, most absurdly, that God could have no good reason for creating them, but that of communicating happiness to them, and happiness such as they would have, happiness without alloy. The accusation, brought against the goodness of God, is founded, therefore, on a false representation, and an arbitrary supposition. Modern philosophers are more to be blamed on this account, than the ancients. They have a nobler view of the immense universe. They know, that this planet is a part of it. How then can they assume, that this part was made for one species of the animals it produces, rather than for the whole system? Divines are still more to be blamed than mere philosophers. A confederacy with atheists becomes ill the professors of theism, and less than any, those who pretend to teach it. No matter: they persist, and having done their best, in concert with their allies, to destroy the belief of the goodness of God, they endeavor to destroy that of his justice, which is a further article of their alliance. I have said already, that lest the bare existence of physical and moral evil should not afford the atheists color enough to deny the being of God, nor the divines a sufficient foundation to erect a heaven and a hell, they proceed to consider these evils relatively to the distribution of them, and they pronounce this distribution unjust. Their declamations are heard on this subject with a double advantage, the partiality of love, and the prejudice of aversion. Men are apt to pass easily, and silently, over the good, and complain loudly of the evil by which they are affected in their own persons, or in the persons

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of those whom they approve. As easily, and silently, do they pass over the evil, which they never think sufficient, and complain loudly of the good, which they always think too much, that falls to the share of those whom they disapprove, or who stand on any account in opposition to them. On such motives they are induced to charge the Providence of God with injustice. But here the confederacy breaks. The atheist concludes once more, that there is no God. The divine still maintains, that there is one. How well they both support the charge, how effectually the latter re-asserts the justice of the Supreme Being, we are now to inquire: and I persuade myself, that you will be under some surprise to find a charge so groundless, that has been so long and so clamorously brought, and a hypothesis so weak, that has prevailed so long and so generally among theists. I know not, whether the natural temper and disposition of mankind, by which we must account for one, or the political and private interests, by which we must account for the other, will take off this surprise till you have considered them thoroughly, in their rise and progress, and found them to be permanent causes of permanent effects. Then, indeed, your surprise will cease, because you will find nothing in this case, which you will not find in many others; that is, error established and perpetuated by affections, passion, interest, and authority among men, in opposition to the plainest dictates of their reason.

That good men are often unhappy, and bad men happy, has been a subject of invective, rather than of argument, to Epicurus, to Cotta, and to others among the ancients. It has been too nearly so in the writings of some of the moderns, and little less in those of some eminent divines. I have quoted Clarke on several occasions. I must quote him on this. In his Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion,* as well as in his Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God,† he presumes to say: "It is certain and necessary, even as certain as the moral attributes of God," (and he had before affirmed the moral to be as essential to the divine nature as the natural, and, therefore, as certain as God's existence,) "that there must be, at some time or other, such a revolution, and renovation, of things, such a future state of existence of the same persons as that, by an exact distribution of rewards and punishments therein, all the present disorders, and inequalities, may be set right, and that the whole scheme of Providence may appear at its consummation to be a design worthy of infinite wisdom, justice, and goodness." At its consummation; for it appears actually unworthy of them, as these men not only imply, but say. The hypothetical certainty

* Page 130. † Ibid. 131.

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and necessity on which the doctor is willing to risk our acknowledgment of a Supreme Being, or our denial of him, is founded on this assertion; "that rewards and punishments, in general, are necessary to support the honor of God, and of his law and government;" and on this assumed proposition "that the condition of mankind, in this present state, is such that the natural order of things is perverted, and virtue and goodness prevented from obtaining their proper and due effects." Audacious and vain sophist! His whole chain of reasoning from the moral attributes of God downwards is nothing more than one continued application of moral human ideas to the designs and conduct of God: and, in this case, he assumes, most presumptuously, that the scheme and order of things which God has established in this system of ours are such as cannot be reconciled, even to the notions of human justice. His terms have a very solemn air that may impose on the unwary, and confirm the habitual prejudices of others. But he who analyses them, and attends to the sense of them, will perceive that more absurdity cannot be stuffed into so few words.

To begin this analysis; let us consider the terms good and bad, happy and unhappy, as they stand here applied. Men will be never agreed about the former; the latter can never be ascertained: and, consequently, the proposition that good men are unhappy, and bad men happy, should not be advanced in the sense in which it is advanced, and as if the natural order of things was perverted; for what is the natural order of things? It is that which the author of nature has established, and according to which evil may happen sometimes to the good, and good to the bad: but according to which, likewise, virtue can never lead to unhappiness, nor vice to happiness. It is false, therefore, to say that the natural order is actually perverted, as if unhappiness was really become the consequence of virtue, and happiness of vice, in the course of human affairs. But now, who are the good? who are the bad? If by the good are intended such as conform themselves to the law of nature, and by the bad such as violate this law; the words are very equivocal, and must appear so in their applications. Men differ in nothing more than in the characters they impute to one another, even in their private thoughts: and when they agree the most, it is very possible they may not judge as God judges, though they pretend to judge by the same rule, which they call the eternal reason of things. Those whom they admire for great achievements, they call great; those who have done them good, they call good, and often confound the two. So that the justice of divine Providence is condemned, or acquitted, on the fallible and interested judgments of men.

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Such indeed they are. Go back to the early ages of the world. Consider their heroes and their demigods, observe by what goodness they acquired the honors of deification. They destroyed sometimes robbers or wild beasts. Others of them sowed corn, planted the vine, and invented useful arts. Did these alone constitute good men according to the law of nature? By no means. Not even the last. Of all the cardinal virtues, fortitude seems chiefly to have been cultivated by the heroes of antiquity: and, notwithstanding some good that they did, their rapes, their duels, their battles, the injuries they offered, and the vengeance they took, made them at once objects of admiration, and plagues to mankind. When we descend to later ages, more enlightened by philosophy, and more renowned for wisdom of government, we find the characters of good and bad men rather more equivocal, and much honor done to great vices, as well as to great virtues, according to the modes and prevalent passions of the time, which sanctified, by the help of prepossession and flattery, such actions as right reason can never approve. If we judge by this, and by this alone we should judge, what shall we think of those Roman and Greek worthies, for instance, whose names and actions have been delivered down by their historians so pompously to posterity?* I might call in question the chastity of Scipio, and the fidelity of Regulus to his parol. I might doubt on the face of their history, and without any more particular anecdotes, whether Drusus was a less factious citizen than Saturninus. I might bring reasons to excuse, perhaps to justify, the Gracchi. I might prove, by some letters of Cicero to Atticus, that the second Brutus was the vilest of usurers. But I waive such particulars as we have not, for the most part, sufficient means of examining, and I ask whether the best of these men, in the best days of the Roman or Grecian commonwealths, were not the instruments of ambition, of avarice, of injustice, and cruelty? They were great men most certainly, but their goodness was often problematical, in Greece as well as at Rome. When revealed religions arose, a true one like the Christian, a false one like the Mahometan, the same uncertainty remained, and the same fallacious judgments were made about morality. But there arose too a new sort of goodness at the same time, for we need attempt to go no further back: and, about this, men can never be agreed. The Christians pass for ill men among the Mahometans, the Mahometans among the Christians; the sects of Omar and Ali censure each other; we tax your church with superstition and

* Vide Au. Gellium.

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idolatry; she taxes ours with heresy and schism: and thus contrary judgments are passed on one another, not only by particular men, but by whole communities. It may be said, that these judgments are not passed as generally, and as rashly, as I pretend; and that the Christian, who condemns the Mahometan, or the Mahometan, who condemns the Christian religion, may distinguish very truly at the same time between the good and the bad men of the contrary party. But if it be said, it will not hold; for the new sort of goodness which has been mentioned is that, not only as much but more than moral goodness, by a regard or disregard to which the justice of God, in the dispensations of providence, is tried in every religion that claims the prerogative of a revealed system, and according to which it is assumed that men will be rewarded or punished hereafter. Such has been, and such is the state of this matter.

Let us consider next the terms happy and unhappy. They are more vague, and less easy to be ascertained in their application than the others. Agreeable sensations, the series whereof constitutes happiness, must arise from health of body, tranquillity of mind, and a competency of wealth. An absolute privation of all these we are not to suppose. The case cannot happen; or if it could, an immediate end would be put to the miserable being. But, how shall we judge for other men of the several degrees, in which they enjoy all or any of these? How shall we make up their several accounts of agreeable and disagreeable sensations, and pronounce their state to be, according to the balance, tolerable, or happy, or very happy? To pretend to it is, at least, as absurd as to pretend to measure the degrees of goodness: since neither of them consists so much in outward show as it does in the inward sentiment: and yet, without being able to measure both, what saucy, what pragmatical presumption is it to pretend, in any sort, to judge of providential dispensations, even supposing them to be those of particular providences?

LIII.

We will enter, if you please, first into some reflections on the general tendency of virtue and vice to promote happiness, and after that into a more particular detail. I think then, that health of body is pretty equally distributed to good men and bad, whether Jews, Christians, Turks, or infidels. In this respect too the good are likely to have in themselves, and in their posterity, much the advantage. But, besides, if health and vigor of body were to be found more commonly among the wicked than the

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good, it might appear to be, like other instances of prosperity, the cause, it will never appear to be the effect, of vice.

Tranquillity of mind is the inseparable companion of virtue, that adds relish and savor to all the comforts, and takes off their bitter taste from all the misfortunes of life. It is the health of the mind. Without this, no intellectual joy can be tasted, as without the other no corporeal pleasure. The virtuous man looks back with complacency, and feels the truth of that saying of Tully: "a good conscience is the great theatre of virtue." The present satisfies him, and the future gives him no alarm. The second Brutus exclaimed, that virtue was an empty name. Stoical virtue was little better; nor his, in particular, any more than a mask that hid, under an appearance of apathy, the most violent and the vilest passions, like the sanctity of several ancient and modern saints, who have imposed on the Christian world. But true moral virtue is something very real. It is the cause of our happiness, it maintains the tranquillity of human life. If happiness be a series of agreeable sensations, the less this series is exposed to interruption, the more happy we are. But it must be exposed to perpetual interruptions, if that which causes and maintains it be not in our own power. Virtue is so; and thus virtue may be said, without any paradox, to be its own reward.* If it has no reward from without, it rewards itself by inward, and therefore independent tranquillity.

Good men may have commonly a less share in the advantages of fortune, as they are less likely to use the means of acquiring them, but then they want them less; and though it be a false thought, which Seneca makes the divinity employ, "that their happiness consists in wanting no happiness,"† yet is it true, that their happiness is enhanced, as well as secured, by a great independence on every thing external; and the same Seneca says, somewhere else, most divinely well, that he placed the good things he enjoyed within his reach, and yet at such a distance that fortune might take, but could not tear, them from him. The good man slakes his thirst with a moderate draught of outward prosperity. The chalice of the wicked man, is never sufficient, be it never so large; and to all his passions, as well as to his avarice, "nescio quid curtæ semper abest rei." There is a fragment among Plutarch's Miscellanies, where fortune and vice are introduced like the contractors, who appear and make their offers, when any public work is to be let out. Fortune boasts,

* Hoc dabitis, ut opinor, si modo sit aliquid, esse beatum, id oportere totum poni in potestate sapientis. Nam si amitti vita beata potest, beata esse non potest.—Tull. de Fin. l. ii.

† Intus omne posui bonum. Non carere felicitate felicitas vestra est.—De Provid.

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that she can take from men every outward good, and bring upon them every outward evil. Vice replies that this is true, but that it is not sufficient to make them miserable, unless she gives her assistance; whereas she is able to render them so without the assistance of fortune, and in spite of all her endeavors to make them happy.

Thus heathen philosophers taught mankind, and there was no need of defending the providence of God against Zeno, nor Aristotle. The former held, that there was no real good but virtue. The latter, that health of body, and the external advantages of fortune, might be reckoned among the good things of life, but that they were such in a degree very far below those that result from virtue. Happiness, therefore, fell solely to the share of good men, according to the Stoicians; or principally to them, according to the Peripatetics:* and this was indeed a noble contest. Christians are far from having any such. If they do not assume that health, and the advantages of fortune, constitute happiness solely, they assume that it is constituted principally by these; since on the want which good men have sometimes of these they accuse God of injustice. They pretend to keep an account between God and man, to barter so much virtue, or so many acts of devotion, against so many degrees of honor, of power, of riches; and to have their piety purchased by the gratification of their passions. If God exacts the duty, he must pay the price. If he does not pay it in this life, he must pay it in another. Till that time, they give him credit: and if he does not pay it then, he is an unjust and cruel being. I will crayon out a picture on this occasion in imitation of those Cleanthes used to draw when he disputed against the partizans of volupty. Let all good Christians, to denote their goodness and the justice of God, be fat and jolly like canons in the Lutrin. Let them be seated on thrones with diadems on their heads, sceptres in their hands, and purple robes on their shoulders. Let the virtues, like so many cupids in Albano's pictures, run about the landscape, busy in the service of their masters. Let justice lead the wicked like slaves, with retorted arms, and downcast eyes, to their footstools. Let temperance serve pyramids of ortolans and brimmers of tockay on their tables. Let moderation offer, and they receive, sacks filled with gold and silver, and baskets full of diamonds and rubies. In the midst, and front, of the piece let the great Lama of the east be placed on a higher throne than

* Pugnant stoici cum peripateticis. Alteri negant quidquam esse bonum nisi quod honestum sit. Alteri plurimum se, et longè longéque plurimum tribuere honestati; sed tamen et in corpore, et extra, esse quædam bona. Certamen honestum, et disputatio splendida.—Tull. de Fin. l. 2.

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the rest, if it be sent to some Tartarian temple: his younger brother of the west, if it be sent to St. Peter's church at Rome: his Grace of Canterbury, or my Lord of London, if it be sent to St. Paul's; and Luther, or Calvin, if it be sent to any other religious assembly of Christians in these parts of the world.

Having said thus much to show the general tendency of virtue to promote the inward and real happiness of mankind, in opposition to divines, and atheists, who make it consist so much in outward enjoyments, that every diminution of these, in the circumstances of every reputed good man, is an instance brought in proof of the unjust dispensations of Providence; I proceed to take notice of some particular instances that have been so brought. They will serve, I think, to show that God is wise, and man a fool; and that, of all fools, the most presumptuous, and, at the same time, the most trifling, are metaphysical philosophers and divines.

I neither deny nor affirm, particular providences. The supposition of such has given occasion to much lying, to much flattery, to much uncharitableness, to much superstition, and enthusiasm. When the votive pictures of those who had escaped being drowned were shown to Diagoras at Samothracia, he asked where the pictures were of those who had perished at sea? The atheist believed no providence, for he believed no God.—The priests would not have been over-much concerned to convince him of a general providence, but they would have produced their legends as well as their relics to prove to him the particular providences by which their votaries had been saved. I enter here no further into the discussion of this point. But this I say, that the physical and moral systems have no need, like the bungling works and imperfect institutions of men, to be carried on by frequent interpositions and partial directions, that they may continue to answer the intent of the maker. The ordinary course of things, preserved and conducted by a general providence, confirms what the law of reason and of nature teaches us. The law is not only given, but executed. The authority of the lawgiver makes it our duty, the sanctions make it our interest to obey the law: and these sanctions have their effect so often, that they leave no doubt concerning them. They have their effect as often as it is necessary in terrorem. In imitation of providential government, human government goes no further: and yet there are a parcel of little tyrants who find fault with the former for going no further. God punishes to reform, as far as our nature, and his scheme, permit. They are angry that he is not as angry as they are, that every criminal is not racked on the wheel, and that he does not punish to exterminate. Let us descend to particular instances that are urged against the justice

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of God, in order to prove it, and to confirm what has been said concerning good, and bad, happy, and unhappy, men.

LIV.

Tully lies still open before me, and there I find many instances of this sort produced by Cotta with as much confidence as if they were decisive. Why did the two Scipios fall in Spain, and Marcellus and Paulus in Italy, making war against the Carthaginians? Why did Maximus bury his son who was of consular dignity? Why was the Æmilian Scipio not safe in his own house? Why was Rutilius banished, Drusus assassinated, Scævola slain at the altar of Vesta, and Catulus obliged to procure his own death? Why did Marius die in his bed, after a seventh consulship? Why were he, and Cinna, Dionysius the elder, Pisistratus, Phalaris, Apollodorus, and even the assassin Varius, and the highwayman Harpalus, suffered so long to exercise, with impunity, their cruelties? The day would be too short, indeed, to enumerate instances of any kind in this declamatory, loose, and inconclusive manner.* It is not unlike the proceeding of certain great scholars, who crowd their text and their margin with a multitude of names, which stand as vouchers of the facts or opinions they advance, and impose often on the unwary who will not, and the ignorant who cannot, examine for themselves; whilst they, who will and can examine, discover these pretended vouchers to be sometimes of no authority, sometimes of neither and sometimes of the contrary side. I could point out signal examples of this sort in the writings of admired authors: and we might have seen some such, perhaps, on this occasion, if Cicero had made Balbus reply to Cotta, as he makes him lay in a claim to do, with no small confidence.

I regret the want of this reply much more on account of facts, than arguments; for the Stoics were great logicians, and pitiful reasoners. Their whole philosophy was little more than a perpetual play with words: and, on this occasion for instance, to have replied in character, Balbus must have insisted that pain is not an evil, as Posidonius did, when he roared out in a fit of the gout.† He might have owned it to be something rough, abhor-

* Dies deficiat si velim numerare quibus bonis malé evenerit; nec minus, si commemorem quibus improbis optimé.

† Concludunt ratiunculis stoici cur non sit malum; quasi de verbo, non de re, laboretur. . . . . Asperum est, contra naturam, difficile perpessu, triste, durum. Hæc copia verborum est; quod omnes uno verbo malum appellamus, id tot modis posse dicere. Definis ut mihi, non tollis dolorem.—Tusc. Disp. l. 2.

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rent to nature, difficult to be borne, melancholy and hard. He might have applied the definition of evil to the sensation of pain, but must not have called it by that name, because the Portic had decreed that there is no evil but in vice, nor any good but in virtue. No matter. He would have set very probably the facts, which Cotta quoted, in a different light, and would have shown by a fuller and more accurate state of them, that they were insufficient to his purpose. It is very probable, he would have done this, since we have good reason, even at this time, to doubt the exact truth of some of these anecdotes, and to suspect both prejudice, and partiality, in the characters.

I know not, whether Balbus would have called in question the story of Regulus.* It was probably fabulous, in many circumstances at least, and there were those among the Romans who thought it to be so. But it served to blacken the Carthaginians, to whom they bore an immortal hatred, and popular prejudice kept it in credit at Rome: as we see that many false traditions about the Saracens and Turks have been kept up for several ages, and are so still, notwithstanding the detection of them, in Christian nations. Their poets, and their orators, sanctified the tale for the honor of the Roman name, as the most illustrious instance of magnanimity, fortitude, and a religious attachment to engagements taken even with an enemy, that was ever given. Balbus then might have rejected the story; or, taking it for true, he might have insisted, that it furnished an example of human virtue, but none of divine injustice. He might have made Regulus a voluntary martyr, as Seneca makes the philosopher Diogenes a confessor of natural religion.

One of these Stoicians might have anticipated the answers which the other of them gave to such examples, as that of Rutilius, who was banished, or that of Maximus, who lost a son arrived to consular honors. He would have said of such men as these, that they were unfortunate, but not unhappy, that they were moved, but not overcome.† He might have pushed his argument against Cotta further, on the principles of the Portic. He might have maintained, that the misfortunes of some good men are designed as lessons to all by Providence, in whose dispensations more regard is had to mankind, than to particular men.‡ In general, we place happiness and unhappiness very blindly, and very falsely. Providence endeavors to open our eyes, when things, that we esteem evils, happen to the good.

* Vide Au. Gellium.

† . . . Sentit illa, sed vincit.—Sen. De Provid.

‡ . . . . . Pro universis, quorum major diis cura est, quam singulorum. Ibid.

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But we pervert the argument. Instead of concluding, that such things are not real evils, we hearken to the prejudices of imagination; we believe, and, by believing, we make them such, and then we accuse this very Providence of injustice. Even the privation of an imaginary good is esteemed a positive evil, the want of riches for instance. The man of Ross was envied by none. Chartres and Walters, whom you have rendered immortal, were envied by many. This folly prevails so far, that men have imagined the Supreme Being best pleased, when his temples have glittered with gold and silver. If you was of this opinion, as most of your communion are, and thought God more honored on this account at St. Peter's, than at St. Paul's, I would quote to you these verses:

——— Jupiter Ammon
Pauper adhuc Deus est, nullis violata per ævum
Divitiis delubra tenens, morumque priorum
Numen Romano templum defendit ab auro.*

The examples of those good citizens of Rome, who came to untimely ends, would not have embarrassed our Stoician. He would have asked his antagonist, what pretence could be found to accuse Providence of injustice, because men who waged war were sometimes killed, or because men who mingled in civil contests were exposed to the mutual resentments of exasperated parties? He would have asked, who could determine when it was best for him to die? Prolongation of days delivers men over, very often, to misery they would have escaped if they had died sooner, and changes the whole color of their lives: so that the good or evil that remains in store for us, at any age, being uncertain, we can neither pronounce a man unhappy because he dies, nor happy before he dies. Solon† taught this apothegm to Crœsus, who lived to see it verified in his own case, and to reverence that wisdom, when he was the captive of Cyrus, to which he had paid little regard, while he sat on the throne of Lydia. Rome, who made all the nations from the Euphrates to the western ocean tremble, trembled herself, when Pompey fell sick at Naples. Pompey recovered. "Multæ urbes et publica vota vicerunt." But he recovered only to wage the civil war with his father-in-law, to take arms without being prepared to take them, to abandon Italy, to be beaten in Greece, and to be murdered, by servile hands, in Egypt.‡ Such a subject as Pompey,

* Lact. L. 9.

† . . . . Dicique beatum
Ante obitum nemo supremaque funera debet.

‡ . . . . Non enim cum Socero bellum gessisset, non imparatus arma sumpsisset, etc.—Tusc. Disp. L. 2.

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of such a commonwealth as the Roman, may be paired with the greatest princes. Let me mention, therefore, the late king of France, on this occasion and to the same purpose. He had passed more than forty years in the greatest prosperity, when Charles the Second of Spain died. Had he died at the same time, when that rich succession came into his family, his death would have been thought the more deplorable on this very account. He lived; he outlived his glory, his power, and if I may say so, almost his posterity. It might have been said to him: "—renovata semper clade domus multis in luctibus, inque perpetuo mœrore et nigrâ veste senescit."

Balbus would have shown that the examples brought of prosperous iniquity were neither more just, nor more applicable, than those of the misery of good men. If he had allowed that Marius had the happiness, such a one as it is, of dying in his bed like his rival Sylla, who took the appellation of happy very ostentatiously and very unjustly, yet he would not have allowed this other man of blood the same appellation. Notwithstanding his elevation from the plough, which he followed for hire, to the highest dignities of the commonwealth,* notwithstanding his victories and triumphs, it would be difficult to find in the Roman or any other history a man whose crimes were more constantly punished, or whose life was a series of more misery. Besides his bodily infirmities, besides the

> Exilium et carcer, Minturnarumque paludes,
> Et mendicatus victâ Carthagine panis,

he was tossed in all the storms he raised. His blood was every moment ready to flow, and the victorious sword of Sylla hung over his head. The various scenes of misery, through which he made others go, were revenged by those through which he went himself. There is a lively description of both in the second book of the Pharsalia:† and if we read his life, we shall incline to think that prosperity was measured out to him for the punishment of others, and misery, in proportion, for his own, the executioner and the victim, alternately, of divine justice.

> Non ille favore
> Numinis ingenti superum protectus ab irâ,
> Vir ferus, et Romam cupienti perdere fato
> Sufficiens.

If he lived to a greater age than his brother and his son, it was

* . . . . . Solebat
Poscere mercedes alieno lassus aratro.—Juv.

† . . . . Omnia passo,
Quæ pejor fortuna potest, atque omnibus uso,
Quæ melior.

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in order to make him more miserable, as he had been more criminal, than they. But even they resembled him in misery, as they had resembled him in cruelty. His brother was put to a painful death at the tomb of Catulus, and his son fell on his sword in despair. Let me make another observation. Marius laid the foundations of his fortune on his ingratitude and treachery to Metellus, whose lieutenant-general he had been in the Jugurthine war. Sylla had been quæstor to Marius in the same war. Sylla ruined his party, defeated his designs, and scattered his ashes in the river.* Surely Cotta, when he accused the justice of God for giving prosperity to wicked men, could not have produced a more glaring proof of the contrary.

He was not more lucky in other examples of the same sort. Our Stoician would have opposed to him, for instance, the different accounts of authors concerning the elder Dionysius, some of whom related how this tyrant had been tormented by the furies, and had perished by the treachery of his own family, whilst all of them concurred in representing his whole life to have been a state of misery. What indeed could be more miserable than the perpetual terror and universal distrust,wherein he passed his days? Plutarch relates, and Balbus might know long before Plutarch wrote, that this wretched man dared not trust any barber to shave him; that no one, not his brother, not his son was suffered to come into his apartment, till he had been stripped and searched, and had changed his clothes, and that the tyrant owned himself afraid even of the best of his friends; so that if he reigned eight and thirty years, as Cotta says, he was eight and thirty years miserable. A noble instance truly of the prosperity of the wicked!

Our Stoician would have shown, perhaps, that the example of Pisistratus was not pertinent. He used violence to gain, and more than once, to regain the supreme power at Athens, as Gelo and Hiero did in Sicily, as others used it against him, and as it must always happen when parties contend for power. But when he had got this power, he used it well, like those Sicilian princes; and though he was called a tyrant, in the bad sense of the word, by the party opposed to him, yet he showed the licentious Greeks, how much a limited monarchy, for he limited his by the laws and advice of Solon, was preferable to one of their turbulent and tyrannical democracies. Phalaris was a monster in cruelty; but the people of Agrigentum roasted him in his own bull, after he had roasted the maker of it; and the Orchomenians took a severe vengeance on Apollodorus. The same would have been observed to have happened to other tyrants among

* Erutos cineres in Anienis alveum sparsit.—Val. Max. L. ix, c. 9.

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the Greeks, to Cinna among the Romans, and to other inferior villains, such as Varius, who stabbed Drusus and poisoned Metellus, such as Harpalus, whose long success in robbery bore testimony against the gods, as Diogenes the Cynic who barked against them, and whom Cotta condescends to quote, presumed to say.

But the pontiff would not have been silenced by these answers. He had a reply ready. "Prohiberi melius fuit impedirique." It had been better in the gods to hinder these men from doing so much mischief, than to leave them to vengeance afterwards. Now I think that Balbus would have treated this reply as a mere evasion, grounded on a false supposition, and even with that help, insufficient. The men spoken of, would he have said, are far from enjoying inward happiness, whatever outward prosperity may attend the course of their wicked lives. They live in danger, in fear, and in perpetual anguish of mind. Their punishment, therefore, is not deferred; and if they are suffered long to punish others, they are ministers and proofs at the same time of that divine justice which I defend. Their prosperity serves to this very purpose. A Dionysius, or a Cinna, or any other inhuman tyrant, is to be looked upon like one of those monsters which the poets feigned. Like a Minotaur fed with human flesh, or such a boar as executed Diana's vengeance in Ætolia. Bolts of destroying thunder go out of their mouths.* Their very breath scatters desolation around. When the monster has inflicted the punishment he was sent to inflict, when the measure of his iniquity, and of God's justice, is filled, a Theseus or a Meleager is raised up, and he perishes.

This is the general course of things which infinite wisdom has constituted, and the examples of the few who suffer necessarily, though occasionally according to it, are sufficient to give a warning to all men that they are inexcusable if they do not take. Cotta, who exercises greater injustice towards God than any of the tyrants he quotes did towards men, is much scandalised that those two eyes of the Mediterranean coast, Corinth and Carthage, were put out. Critolaus violated the respect that was due to the Roman legates. Asdrubal used much cruelty to the Roman captives. These were the immediate causes of the ruin of those two republics, and Memmius and Scipio were the instruments of pride, of ambition, and of insatiable resentment. God could have prevented these destructions, no doubt "subvenire certé potuit et conservare urbes tantas atque tales." But how did the pontiff know that Memmius and Scipio were not instru-

* ——— Ultorem spreta per agros misit aprum.
Fulmen ab ore venit, frondes afflatibus ardent.—Ovid. Metam. l. viii.

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ments of the justice of Providence, as well as of Roman policy and passion? The worst men, and the Romans were none of the best, are employed to punish the worst. None so fit for the task. They are the instruments, and in their turns the examples of divine justice. The wealth, the splendor, the magnificence of Corinth were great; but Corinth was a sink of iniquity. Carthage was a great and powerful state; but the Carthaginians were a faithless, factious, and cruel people. Might not these be the remote and true causes, whatever the immediate and apparent were, of their destruction? Was God obliged to save them by an extraordinary interposition against the ordinary course of his providence, because their neighbors admired or feared them? The Romans had no advantage in real virtue over the Carthaginians, though they had it greatly in policy, order, discipline, and a certain enthusiastic zeal for the grandeur of their empire, and the glory of the Roman name. If we had Philistus or any of the Carthaginian historians in our hands, we should see very evidently what we may collect from those of Rome, that *Romana fides* was or deserved to be a proverbial term of reproach in Africa as much as *Punica fides* in Italy. Let us take then occasion to adore the wisdom and justice of divine Providence from an example brought in opposition to the latter. The Romans destroyed Carthage, and, by her destruction, prepared the way to their own. At the very time when Cotta lamented that of Corinth and Carthage, that of Rome was coming on; for the loss of her liberty was connected with that of her empire by a scarce interrupted succession of tyrants. Under these she lay as it were on the rack, and died a lingering and painful death.

LV.

In asserting the justice of Providence, I choose rather to insist on the constant, visible, and undeniable course of a general providence which is sufficient for the purpose, than to assume a dispensation of particular providences. The atheist, who assumes that there ought to be such, complains that they are wanting. The theist, who admits that there are such, complains that they are insufficient. The former draws from what he assumes a pretence to cavil. The latter only grows inconsistent: for I would ask him, if there any such providences, why not more? He admits enough to break through and overturn the natural order and constitution of the physical and moral system. How comes it to pass that there are not enough to stop his mouth when he complains of the misery of man and the injustice of

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Providence? The truth is, that we have not in philosophical speculation, in any history except that of the Bible, nor in our own experience, sufficient grounds to establish the doctrine of particular providences, and to reconcile it to that of a general providence, which continues, and directs the course of things in the material and intellectual systems, as these systems were originally constituted by the author of nature. They who have attempted to do this by showing with great, and, as I think, with too much subtility of wit and license of imagination, in what cases, how far, and in what manner, God may act by particular and occasional interpositions, consistently with the preservation of that general order of causes and effects which he has constituted, seem to me quite unintelligible. It is impossible to conceive that the course of the sun, or the double revolution of the earth, should be suspended or altered by a temporary, nay, a momentary interposition of some particular providence, or that any thing worthy of such an interposition should happen in the material world, without violating the mechanical constitution of it, and the natural order of causes and effects in it. As little is it possible to conceive such occasional interpositions in the intellectual system as shall give new thoughts and new dispositions to the minds of men, and in consequence new determinations to their wills, without altering in every such instance the ordinary and natural progression of human understanding, nor without resuming that freedom of will, which every man is conscious that he has, though some are absurd enough to deny it, and to oppose metaphysical dreams to intuitive knowledge. I confess, that I comprehend as little the metaphysical, as the physical, impulse of spirits,* and that the words suggestion, silent communication, sudden influence, influx, or injection of ideas, give me no determinate, clear and distinct ideas, nor even, as I suspect, to the persons who talk of them the most, and build so much upon them.

To acknowledge the fatum of ancient philosophers, to hold with the Mahometans an absolute predestination of all events, with Spinoza and Calvin the necessity of all our actions, or with Leibnitz, his whimsy of a pre-established harmony, would be somewhat almost as mad, as to take the true history of Lucian for such. On the other hand, it would be absurd and impious both to assert with Epicurus, that the world was made by a fortuitous concourse of atoms, and that, as it was made so, it is governed by chance, without any knowledge, without any rule, without any Providence. The truth lies between these extremes. The world is governed by laws, which the Creator imposed on

* Relig. of Nat. Delineated, et alibi.

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the physical and moral systems, when he willed them into existence, which make a part of them, which must be in force as long as they last, and any change in which would be a change of the systems themselves. These laws are invariable, but they are general: and from this generality what we call contingency arises. The laws of matter and motion, those which we know and those which have not been yet discovered, are fixed, no doubt. But within the latitude which they allow, though nothing happens which is repugnant to them, many things happen which seem so to us. Plastic, or fashioning nature, produces sometimes monsters, and all material beings as they partake of the good, partake of the evil, which matter and motion cause; for it would be trifling to object the assumed existence of beings, material indeed like the saints in heaven, if those glorified bodies are material, according to our idea of matter, but existing in systems that are not liable to the same inconveniences or evils that arise from matter and motion, such as pain, sickness, or death, for instance, which our system is. There is no need of any great sagacity to perceive that the case is much the same in the moral world; nay, that it is more liable to contingency than the natural. The moral world is subject to the law of right reason, fixed, invariable, promulgated in the very nature of things, and enforced by the sanctions of rewards and punishments, which follow often the observation or the breach of it. But then, instead of two principles, whereof one is active, and the other passive only, as in the other case, there are in this two active principles, though one be slower than the other, reason and passion. Both necessary in the human state. Both useful when reason, both hurtful when passion governs. Between both stands the freedom of our will which can determine either way, and from this constitution arises all that mixture of moral good and evil that we see and feel.

As little as the atheist and the divine approve the natural and moral constitution of the world, they are unable to show how it might be altered in any particular instance, except for the worse upon the whole; and, therefore, they must be reduced at last to assert, that goodness and justice require the whole should be altered, as they required originally that there should have been no such system made. In the first light they deserve to be treated like froward children who complain, and wish, and know neither what they want, nor what they desire. In the second, they deserve to be treated like patients, proper for Doctor Monroe, and to be put under his care. Nothing less than metaphysics could have turned so many good heads. Common sense and common observation would have hindered them from assuming, on the faith of this fantastical science, that God made the world for the

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sake of man; and man for this reason alone, that he might communicate happiness to his creature: which two suppositions are affirmed or implied in all their arguments, and thus a large field of complaint is opened to them. Without these they would have had no pretence to criticise the works of God, nor the dispensations of his providence, to upbraid his goodness, nor to censure his justice. On the contrary they would have found reason to admire, thankfully and submissively, that supreme wisdom, which has provided so amply, by a few general laws, for the well-being of all his creatures. But it is with this very instance of supreme wisdom, that they find fault. General laws, under the direction of a general providence, do not provide sufficiently for human happiness, according to them; and their notions of human importance are wound up so high, that they think there ought to be as many providences as men, on which notion guardian angels, and genii, and demons were introduced, and are hardly yet exploded; or else that the immediate providence of God should be attentive to all the wants and prayers of men, though the wants are often imaginary, and the prayers impertinent, and should be ready on every occasion to protect and reward the good, to punish and reclaim the wicked.

Every religion boasts of many instances, wherein the divine providence has been thus exercised. We need go no further than our own ecclesiastical historians, and other Christian writers to find them. The most common events are represented by exaggeration and declamation to have been extraordinary interpositions of the hand of God. Nay, at this time, there is many an old woman who thinks herself as important as your and Gay's parish clerk, and is ready to relate with much spiritual pride the particular providences that have attended her and hers. Thus then the matter stands. The same persons, who have contributed to establish this belief, have propagated, and continue to propagate an opinion, that the Supreme Being deals unjustly with mankind in this life, because the interpositions of his providence are not so frequent as they judge they ought to be. I say as frequent; for where they assume that he does interpose, they dare not say he interposes unjustly. Clarke complains,* that there are not in many ages plain evidences enough of the interposition of divine providence to convince men of the wisdom any more than of the justice and goodness of God. They reason like Cotta,† they are displeased at the few particular instances of this care; few as they conceive with respect to all the proper objects

* Evid. p. 142.

† . . . . Non placet autem paucis a diis immortalibus esse consultum; sequitur ergo ut nemini consultum sit.

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of it: and since he takes it in so few instances, his justice is no more acquitted at their tribunal than if he took it in none. This belief and this opinion do not hang very well together in reason, but they may do so in religious policy. To keep up a belief of of particular providences serves to keep up a belief not only of the efficacy of prayer, and of the intercession of saints in heaven, as well as of the church on earth, but of the several rites of external devotion; and to keep up a belief that they are few, and that the providence of God, as it is exercised in this world, is therefore on the whole unjust, serves to keep up a belief of another world, wherein all that is amiss here, shall be set right. The ministry of a clergy is thought necessary on both these accounts by all: and there are few, who see how difficult it is to make the two doctrines; which these reverend persons maintain, appear in any tolerable manner consistent. On the whole, though there is little credit to be given to all that lying legends, suspicious traditions, and idle rumors have reported, concerning particular acts of Providence, wrought on particular occasions, and directed manifestly by an immediate exercise of the divine power to the advantage of some, and to the detriment of others, yet will I not presume to deny, that there have been any such. This I will say only, that if any such have been, they must have been such as might happen sometimes in the ordinary course of a general providence. They could not be such as must have violated the laws of nature in their production. Nothing can be less reconcileable to the notion of an all-perfect Being than the imagination that he undoes by his power in particular cases what his wisdom, to whom nothing is future, once thought sufficient to be established for all cases. The effects, therefore, that are assumed of particular providences, are either false, or they are undistinguishable from those of a general providence, and become particular by nothing more than the application which vain superstition or pious fraud makes of them. It is as easy to attack, and it is as easy to defend the justice of God on one hypothesis as on the other. But since one is supported by equivocal and doubtful, and the other by unquestionable facts, I shall borrow no help from the former, I shall suppose them not to have been, and shall rest the cause of God on the latter, which are likewise the most proper to be urged against the atheists.

LVI.

Let us consider how it appears by the objections these difficult persons make that we, and the system we inhabit, should have been framed to satisfy them, and to anticipate their cavils;

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after which it will be proper to consider further, how it is framed, and to compare God's plan with theirs. Physical nature then should have been so constituted that the whole world might have been one paradise, neither scorched by the sun, nor pinched by the cold, nor ruffled by tempests. Men should have enjoyed it in every natural good, have been subject to no natural evil, no not to death which they deem to be the greatest of evils. Moral nature should have been so constituted that every man might be necessarily determined to all the obligations of morality, that he might be good, as Paterculus says of Cato,* because he could not be otherwise. He should have been impeccable as well as invulnerable. No matter how all this would have unconnected the universe, and have broken the harmony, and the consent of its parts, in which we see that the planets of our solar system act on one another, that the sun acts on all of them, and for ought we can tell the several solar systems that compose the universe act on one another likewise. No matter how all this would have accorded with a gradation of sense and intellect; how senses less imperfect would have broken that proportion between them and their object which is necessary to make them useful in human life; how superior faculties of the mind would have broken that scale of intelligence which rises up to man in this animal system; which may rise up from him in other systems in a higher proportion, and which one of these allies, the divine, allows to do so in other created beings. No matter for such considerations as these. Instead of concluding from the want of all these advantages, which they esteem to be due to them, that man is not so noble a creature as they have represented him to themselves, they conclude that because he wants them God is unjust. Just so they concluded from their indeterminable notions of divine goodness, and of divine love, that the world was made for man, and man not to be moderately but immoderately happy in it; instead of concluding the very contrary from their determinate idea of wisdom which has not proportioned any means to these ends in making the world and man.

But the dogmatical persons who assume so much, and prove commonly so little, do not only proceed on groundless principles. They shift and vary their principles of reasoning as different occasions require, which is a practice much used, avowed, and approved by ancient fathers, and which makes it rather tedious than hard very often to refute their successors. In the present argument for instance, many of their complaints and objections are levelled at the whole scheme and order of things both phy-

* Quia aliter esse non potuit.

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sical and moral. They mean nothing, or they mean that the whole should have been differently constituted, and in the manner I have hinted, to have been reconcilable to the goodness and justice of God. But they grow less severe in their criticisms, and less exorbitant in their demands at other times, and seem to think that the divine attributes might have been saved even in the present constitution of physical and moral nature, if by continual interpositions of providence every good man had been protected from evils of both kinds, whilst every ill man was exposed to them all; if the office of the angels standing before the throne of God* and ministering to the favorites of God, that is, to the elect, had been more extended and more regularly performed. This may be looked upon as a sort of composition into which they are driven by the extravagance of the other hypothesis, and by the absurd consequences that flow from it.

If the divine attributes had required that there should have been no such thing as physical or moral evil, man would have been visibly the final cause of a world made solely for his use, and to be the scene of his happiness. This world would have been visibly the final cause of the universe. All the planets would have rolled in subserviency to ours, and the fixed stars themselves would have served to no other purpose than to twinkle by night, to adorn our canopy, and to please our eyes. But this hypothesis appearing too extravagant to be insisted upon in its whole extent, one part of it has been laid aside, and one retained. No one will affirm in terms, I think, at this time, that our world is the final cause of the universe. But many will affirm that man is by the goodness of God the final cause of the world he inhabits; and, therefore, if physical evil is inseparable from physical nature, and moral evil from moral nature, by the necessary relations of things, or by the general scheme which infinite wisdom has established, the consistency of the divine attributes required that something more than we observe should have been done, to make the first design of God in the creation of this world and of man effectual. His goodness required at least, that the general state of mankind should not be as miserable as it is in a world made for the sake of mankind. His justice required most certainly, that they who seek the perfection of their nature, and the happiness of their kind in virtue, should be distinguished from those who deprave their own nature, pervert the order of things, and hinder virtue from having its due effect. What could not be effected by a general providence, acting by general laws, might have been effected by particular providences acting on every occasion, according to

* Vide Dan. c. vii.

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the merit or demerit of every rational creature. But this has not been done, and such providences are so rare, that there is far less virtue than vice to be found, and that the former is, for the most part, unhappy, and the latter prosperous in this world. The justice of God is, therefore, justly condemned, unless there is another. Let us make a few reflections, that will show how ill this charge is laid, and how ill, if it was better laid, the expedient of another life would serve to set right the pretended irregularities of this world, and to justify the providence of God.

LVII.

To suppose a constant series of particular interpositions from above, necessary to this purpose, seems to my apprehension little less absurd than to suppose the necessity of a perpetual and universal theocracy, and to complain that such a government of the world has not been established, is as silly as it would be to complain that the golden age of the poets is ended, or that the millenary year of the Apocalypse is not begun. If all men had been determined necessarily to virtue, there would have been certainly no moral evil, nor probably any more physical than there was in paradise, or than there will be in the new Jerusalem. But there would have been no merit neither, nor properly speaking any such thing as virtue. Our moral obligations arise from that nature, which God willed we should have. They must continue as long as this nature exists, that is, as long as there are men: and so long whatever promotes the happiness of the kind will be virtue at least in one sense, and whatever tends to the destruction of it will be vice in every sense. Vice and virtue must take their denominations not only from their effects, but from their motives. Actions of the first sort must have always a bad motive as well as a bad effect, and must, therefore, be always attended with demerit. But actions of the second, or mere innocence, may have no moral motive at all, nor consequently any true merit, as in the case of an absolute and natural determination; or they may have motives, which render them rather appearances of virtue than really virtuous, and deprive them in a strict sense of all merit, as in the case of particular and occasional determinations of the will wrought by immediate interpositions of the divine power, whether acting silently within, or sensibly without. Our inconsistent Academician confesses thus much in the very breath, in which he affirms that mankind should have been determined, some way or other, by the gods to virtue. Nay, he asserts even more than is true; for though we owe the practice of virtue to ourselves, to our own elections,

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and to our own free will, in which all the merit we can have consists, yet we owe to God the means of knowing, and of practising it.*

If all men had been originally and necessarily determined, by the constitution of their nature, to virtue, according to Cotta's first proposition, and had, therefore, been able to acquire no more merit in doing virtuous actions, than they acquire in drinking, when they are thirsty, or in gratifying any natural appetite, what a curious system might some philosopher of the school of Potamo have made by joining the gods of Epicurus to the men of Cotta? Slim, taper, transparent beings in heaven, indolent and inactive:† a succession of machines on earth, wound up to go a certain time, to continue certain motions, and to strike at certain moments, according to their predestination, or the pre-established harmony of their system. But in good earnest, is a system of particular providences in which the Supreme Being, or the angels, like his ministers to reward, and his executioners to punish, are constantly employed in the affairs of mankind, much more reasonable? Would the justice of God be more manifest in such a state of things, than in the present? I see no room for merit on the part of man, nor for justice on the part of God, in such a state: and a state of partial, not universal, determinations to goodness, instead of being liable to such cavils as we have now under consideration, would be liable to unanswerable objections. It would be productive of effects, quite opposite to those that are assumed, and would cause the wildest confusion in the judgments of mankind.

If some men were determined to goodness by the silent workings of the spirit, and others not, which they must be on the supposition of particular providences, and a partial not universal determination; if the former were protected from evils of every kind, on account of this goodness, and if the latter were exposed, for want of it, to all those physical evils which result from the constitution of the material world, as well as to all those moral evils which men would bring on one another, what could be said to excuse the justice of God? Plainly nothing. The proceeding would be that of injustice, and an arbitrary partiality which can never be imputed, even indirectly, to him without blasphemy. It is not possible for me to conceive, that any thing out of himself could be a motive to the first intelligent cause of all things to create any thing, neither can I subscribe to the opinion, that

* Virtutem nemo unquam acceptam deo retulit. Nimirum recté. Propter virtutem enim jure laudamur, et in virtute recté gloriamur. Quod non contingeret, si id donum a deo, non à nobis haberemus.

. . . . Debebant illi quidem omnes bonos efficere siquidem hominum generi consulebant. Sin id minus, bonis quidem certé consulere debebant.

† Exiles . . . . perlucidos . . . . monogrammos Deos, et nihil agentes.

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certain general independent natures tempted God, as it were, to clothe them with existence. I can conceive still less, that individual creatures, before they have done either good or evil, nay, before their actual existence, can be objects of predilection or aversion, of love or hatred to God: and yet this must have been to have made such a system of particular providences effectual in the first instance of it. If we can conceive it made so in this, we may conceive it made so in all the rest: and if God had predetermined some men to goodness, exclusively of others, without any motive on his side, we may easily conceive that particular providences would have been employed to secure happiness to them, without any merit on theirs. But "credat Judæus Apella non ego." Clarke shall not force me into atheism, though I deny what he asserts, concerning the moral attributes of God, nor Wollaston, though I see, not only one, but many good men unhappy, and am not convinced by his reasonings of a future state.

I may be stopped here, perhaps, and may be asked, with a tone of authority, Nay, but O man, who art thou, that repliest against God? If I am so stopped, and so questioned, my answer is both ready and sufficient. "Holy, or reverend sir, I am a better theist than you, and on this occasion I reason better. It is not I that reply against God. It is you. Had such a system as this, been actually established by God, he would have spoken by his works, and I should, for this very reason, have believed it agreeable to the divine attributes, though I could not have reconciled it to my notions of impartiality, and justice, nor even of wisdom. But since I cannot reconcile it to them, and since I have no assurance but your word, against all appearances, that God elects some men, and rejects or neglects others; that he softeneth the hearts of some, and hardeneth the hearts of others; I should reply against God indeed, if I admitted what you assert to be true. I reason cautiously, from what he has done, to his attributes. You affirm boldly, without any regard to what he has done, or to the perfections of an all-perfect Being."

As to the other part of the hypothesis, which supposes particular providences, that might protect the good and secure their happiness, wanting, and, therefore, God convicted of injustice in the present constitution of things, it is maintained, I think, by the whole chorus of divines; and they who do not hold the doctrine I have mentioned, are as loud in their complaints as they who do. They who agree in little else, agree in censuring the dispensations of Providence, and if some are dissatisfied with the lot of their elect, others are so as much with that of good men, in general, however they came to be good. To satisfy them all, therefore, and to show himself a just gover-

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nor of the world, instead of governing by the established laws of nature and by a general providence, he should have corrected these laws and have governed by particular providences, whenever the service of good men required it. If he had not made all men good, he should have made all good men happy. Now suppose it done, suppose this human reformation of divine economy, what would be the consequences? Would they not be such as these?

If the good, besides the enjoyment of all that happiness which is inseparable from virtue, were exempted from all kinds of evil, and if the wicked, besides those evils which are inseparable from vice, and those which happen to all men in the ordinary course of events, were exposed to others that the hand of God inflicted on them in an extraordinary manner; in short, if an ark was ready, at every inundation, to save the former, and if a destroying angel was ready on every occasion to wreak vengeance on the latter, it is certain, as we have observed already, that such good men would have very little merit, and it may be suspected, that the hearts of the wicked would be hardened, as that of Pharaoh was by all the plagues that God brought on him and his people. Such good men would have, whilst they continued to be good, no other merit than that of children who are cajoled into their duty; or than that of galley-slaves who ply at the oar, because they hear and see and fear the lash of the boatswain.

But would there not be, at the same time, some further defects in this scheme? I think there would. It seems to me that these good men, being thus distinguished, by particular providences in their favor, from the rest of mankind, might be apt either not to contract, or to lose, the general benevolence which is a fundamental principle of the law of nature, and that public spirit, which is the life and soul of society. God has made the practice of morality our interest, as well as our duty. But men, who found themselves constantly protected from the evils that fell on others, might grow insensibly to think themselves unconcerned in the common fate: and if they relaxed in their zeal for the public good, they would relax in their virtue; for public good is the object of virtue. They might do worse. Spiritual pride might infect them. They might become, in their own imaginations, the little flock, or the chosen sheep. Others have become so by the mere force of enthusiasm, without any such inducements as those which we assume in this case, and experience has shown that there are no wolves like these sheep. Thus forced into virtue, and rewarded for being virtuous, they might cease to deserve the reward in any sense, or degree. On the whole; the scheme, opposed to God's scheme, is inconsistent with all our notions of wisdom, as well as of justice. It is the scheme of

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men; it must be tried, therefore, by human ideas and notions; and since the justice of Providence is attacked on these, it may be defended, surely, on the same. To measure the wisdom and justice of God by a rule so inadequate as that of human intelligence, is vanity and presumption in the highest degree. But to expose this vanity and presumption, by showing the men who are guilty of them, that even their own rule is sufficient to condemn them, is very consistent with the modesty of true theism.

I will conclude this head by observing, that we have example, as well as reason, for us, when we reject the hypothesis of particular providences. If the government of a general providence was liable to the objections that are made to it, a government by particular providences would be liable to none. But the contrary appears true from the example of the Jewish theocracy. God was the king of that people. He did not decline the title, nor the exercise of kingly power, as his Son, who came to suffer for all mankind and not to govern a most inconsiderable portion of them, did afterwards. His presence resided among this people, and his justice was manifested daily in rewarding and punishing by unequivocal, signal, miraculous interpositions of his power. The effect of all was this, the people rebelled at one time, and repented at another. Particular providences, directed by God himself immediately, and on the spot, if I may say so, had particular temporary effects only, none general or lasting: and the people were so little satisfied with this system of government, that they deposed the Supreme Being, and insisted to have another king, and to be governed like their neighbors. How long this theocracy may be said to have continued, I am quite unconcerned to know, and should be sorry to misspend any time in inquiring. It is enough for my purpose, to have observed that the justice of God was not so acknowledged as to produce any suitable effects, at a point of time when the Israelites had no other king but God; and to conclude from thence, that if he governed the whole world at present by particular providences, they would not have a better effect in manifesting his justice, nor stop the clamor against it, of the very men, perhaps, who accuse now the injustice of his general providence. Nay the case would be much worse, and every particular exertion of his power would render his justice more disputable. So pregnant is this scheme with absurdities.

It has been said already, that where religions, which claim to have been revealed, prevail, a new character of goodness arises, besides that which consists in obedience to the laws of nature, and compliance with our moral obligations. Faith in certain men, and, on their authority, in certain facts, and certain speculative propositions, how incredible soever the former, how little

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intelligible soever the latter may be, together with the practice of certain duties which the arbitrary will of man imposes, and the observation of certain forms of outward devotion—constitute this artificial goodness, which stands often in the place of natural, and is always attended to much more.

This is that kind of goodness which Christian divines intend principally or solely, when they complain that good men are often unhappy, and bad men happy, by the present constitution of things. They establish a rule, and are not agreed about the application of it; for who are to be reputed good Christians. Go to Rome, they are papists. Go to Geneva, they are Calvinists. Go to the north of Germany, they are Lutherans. Come to London, they are none of these. Orthodoxy is a mode. It is one thing at one time and in one place. It is something else at another time and in another place, or even in the same place; for in this religious country of ours, without seeking proofs in any other, men have been burned under one reign, for the very same doctrines they were obliged to profess in another. You damn all those who differ from you. We doubt much about your salvation. In what manner, now, can the justice of God be manifested by particular providences? Must the order of them change as the notions of orthodoxy change, and must they be governed by events, instead of governing them? If they are favorable to those of your communion, they will be deemed unjust by every good protestant, and God will be taxed with encouraging idolatry and superstition. If they are favorable to those of any of our communions, they will be deemed unjust by every good papist, and God will be taxed with nursing up heresy and schism. God can do nothing more than to furnish arms against himself, by the dispensations of particular providences in the Christian world, and every one of these will pass, in the minds of some men, for a proof of injustice, if it passes in the minds of others for a proof of justice. Nay, more. If, in these dispensations, God, who knows the hearts of men, should judge differently from our divines, if he should show more regard to moral goodness, than to the reputed orthodoxy of any side, it would fare with him—I say it with reverence—as it fares with every honest man in civil contests; He would be calumniated by all sides, in the exercise of particular providences, as he is in that of a general providence.

LVIII.

Having said thus much to show the absurdity of assuming that a system of particular providences is necessary to render the

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government of God, in the present constitution of the physical and moral world, a just government, as it must, indeed, be necessary, if the government of a general providence, according to the established order of things, is unjust; it seems to me, that they who object to this are driven to the greatest of all absurdities. They must either give up their objections, or they must insist that the whole established order of things ought to be changed, and that God cannot govern mankind with justice, unless he undoes all he has done, and asserts this moral attribute at the expense of his wisdom. To say, as Clarke says, "that the natural order of things is so perverted that virtue and goodness cannot obtain their proper and due effects," is a mere fallacy. He begs the question, and begging the question he affirms untruly. How, and when, was the natural order of things perverted? What is every natural order, but that which the Author of nature appoints, and how can it be changed for the better, or for the worse, without a new appointment of his? Are we to believe then, that he has undone his work once already after the fall of Adam, and that he must undo it again, to appear either good or just? To think worthily of God, we must think that the natural order of things has been always the same, and that a Being of infinite wisdom and knowledge, to whom the past and the future are like the present, and who wants no experience to inform him, can have no reason, to alter what infinite wisdom and knowledge have once done, as I have hinted above. Again. What are the proper and due effects of virtue and goodness? Nay, what are virtue and goodness themselves? They are not, I believe, independent, nor eternal, but they are real natures, resulting from the system of rational beings to which they are agreeable, as their contraries are repugnant, and they must therefore, be as invariable as the system of which they are parts. Thus I think; for the opinion of the independency of any natures on God, or of their co-eternity with him, are bugbears to me who am a child in philosophy, though they are none to such full-grown metaphysical giants as Cudworth, Clarke, and others. Now, if virtue and goodness be as invariable as this system, their effects in it must be as invariable as themselves, and, therefore, to say that they cannot obtain their proper and due effects in it is nothing better than cant. They may not obtain all the effects which these great doctors in metaphysics and artificial theology esteem proper and due to them; but they may, and they certainly do, obtain all those which he, who willed this system and them into being, designed that they should obtain; for if he had designed that they should have obtained more, he would have proportioned different means to a different end, and man would have been a less imperfect creature than he is.

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Could philosophers and divines be persuaded to lay aside the affectation of etching out a little real knowledge, with much hypothesis in matters, where hypothesis should be least employed, many things, which are made intricate by this method, would be extremely plain. Thus, for instance, in the present case, let them not assume, that there are natures which exist independently on God, according to which he proceeds, or should proceed, and that we may judge, by a rule common to him and us, the eternal reason of things. Let them not assume, that the moral attributes are precisely the same in God, as they are in our ideas and notions; that they required man should be the final cause of the world, and his happiness the final cause of man. Instead of reasoning from what they imagine these attributes, and an eternal reason of things required that God should do, let them be content to know what his infinite wisdom and power have done, and to reason from thence. Let them not assume, in short, what they have no sufficient grounds to assume, and they will accuse the Supreme Being of injustice no longer.

It may be said, and I know it will be said, that we must assume at least thus much, that God acts always according to the moral fitness of things, or we must assume something worse, we must assume that he acts arbitrarily; and that, on this supposition, we leave ourselves no rule by which to judge of his proceedings, nor to distinguish certainly between a true and a false revelation. Now, I am far from denying that there is an eternal reason. God is himself that reason, and there is no doubt that he proceeds with his creatures in all the exertions of his power, determined by infinite wisdom, according to the fitness of things. But the question is, what are the criterions of this moral fitness relatively to man? I think then, that they are to us, and can be only, that constitution of things which we call the human system, and the notions which arise naturally in our minds on the consideration of it, or which we are able to deduce immediately, and obviously, from it. When we keep within these bounds, we are in no danger of being imposed upon, concerning the will of God, nor by any false revelation. But when we go beyond them, we are apt to impose on ourselves; for, to return some of Clarke's words upon him, though there is a natural and unalterable difference between good and evil; yet nothing but the extremest stupidity of mind, or perverseness of spirit, and disregard to truth, can possibly make any man affirm, like him, that moral fitnesses and unfitnesses are, even in their applications to our scene of action, (and they will be infinitely less so in their applications to that of God,) as manifest as mathematical truths. We may discover moral fitness as we discover natural law, but then we must be on our guard, lest we should pervert our notions of

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moral fitness and unfitness by wrong applications of them out of our system, as we pervert the principles of natural law by wrong applications of them within it. To suppose, in terms, that the laws of human are the laws of divine nature, would be too absurd, though some writers have done no less. But it is just as absurd, nay, it is just the same, to suppose that the moral fitness and unfitness of things must be in every instance, whatever it may be in some, exactly the same to God as it is to man. He made our system for us, not for himself; and though we are sure he cannot exact that we should believe or practise any thing repugnant to the moral fitness resulting from it, we must not imagine that, by abstracting our notions from it, we can render them adequate to that moral fitness which is the object of omniscience, the omniscience of that Supreme Being who is the author of this, and every other system.

The men, who attempt to do this, leave to God nothing more than they assume to themselves, except a greater degree of power: and even this they assume to be limited of right by natures as eternal, and as independent as his own, though executed, in fact, repugnantly to these natures. What these natures are they know as well as he; for they soar up on Platonic wings to the first good and the first just. What his attributes must be to be conformable to these natures, and what they require of him consequently, these persons illuminated by an eternal reason cannot, therefore, fail to know: and they seem to exalt them as if they meant only by exalting them to aggravate the want of goodness and justice in the conduct of Providence. Let not this pass for any exaggeration. It is, in plain terms, the sum of a doctrine they teach in the cant of metaphysical theology, to which they have accustomed the ears of men, and by which they impose on their understandings. I desire no better proof of what is here advanced than the twelfth section of Clarke's Demonstration, and the first of his Evidences. The subject has been often touched in these essays, and even in some of the last paragraphs, but it may be proper, however, to examine this famous argumentation *à priori* a little more particularly. It is plausible, for it speaks to the pride of the human heart, and submits the whole economy of divine wisdom to the judgment of man. But I apprehend that it supposes some things very doubtful, and affirms others that imply contradiction. I will enter into it, therefore, in this place, further than I have done, and slide or leap from subject to subject, or revert to the same a second, and a third time, in these ill connected minutes, as I used to do in the conversations they are designed to recall.

That there is a fitness and unfitness of things to one another, a suitableness and unsuitableness of circumstances to persons,

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no reasonable man will deny. But I suspect, that many reasonable men will doubt, whether they are founded in natures and qualifications independently on God, and antecedently to his will. They will find it difficult to conceive how fitnesses, resulting from the natures of things, or from the qualifications of persons, can be called antecedent to these things, and to these persons: and yet they must be so, if they are antecedent to that will, by the act of which these things and these persons first existed.* It is said that the existence of things, and the argument requires that the same should be said of persons, depends on the arbitrary will of God. But that when they are created, and as long as they exist, their proportions, respects, and relations are abstractly of eternal necessity, according to the different natures of things, and the different qualifications of persons, in one common nature. This I take to be the sense and strength of the argument, which will not appear in my apprehension very intelligible, nor, as far as it is intelligible, very conclusive.

We consider one thing, or one property, one person, or one qualification, without considering another, and by that we make a very real, and, I presume, the sole kind of abstraction our minds are capable of making. But to consider the properties of things, or the qualifications of persons, and the fitnesses and unfitnesses resulting from them, as independent natures existing before there were any such things or any such persons, any such natures, qualifications, circumstances, seems to me a fictitious abstraction doubly. It assumes that we have ideas which we have not, and that the modes of being, by which things and persons are what they are, may be conceived as adventitious to them, instead of being conceived as so constitutive of them that they could not be without the things, and persons, nor these without them. By assuming one of these imaginary abstractions, men are led to assume the other, and their mistake about the operations of nature is connected with that about the operations of their own minds.

The modes of being, and the properties of things are inseparable from them, even in imagination, which might be an argument the more to persuade that they are the same specific natures, and that his will, which constituted these natures, constituted, at the same time, all that is essential to them. But though we cannot separate in this manner, we can take the properties of things, both physical and moral, into distinct consideration. This philosophers have done with honor to themselves, and advantage to others. But when they have been long accustomed to such abstract considerations, and have established cer-

* Evid. p. 87.

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tain mathematical and moral truths upon them, some of these philosophers assume, that these general notions are natures independent on God, and in themselves of eternal necessity. God has made triangles and men. But triangularity they say, and and they might say just as well humanity, are independent natures, antecedent to his will, and that do not owe their original to arbitrary and positive appointment. That there are necessary truths, mathematical and moral, and that such they must be, as long as there are men, and as the present system of things continues, is certain. But they would not be called, perhaps, eternal truths, nor would these notions be represented like eternal and independent natures, if it was more considered, that the self-existent Being is the fountain of all existence, and that, since every thing exists by his will, it must exist according to his will; for which reason it seems as absurd to say, that when he made man, he could give him no other nature than the human, which was therefore necessarily, nor arbitrarily given, as it would be to say, that, when he made a man, he did not make a tree. A man with the properties of a tree would not be a man. A tree with the properties of a man would not be a tree. The same will which made each, made the properties of each. It is one and the same act, and to say that the nature of anything, or the truths resulting from it, are independent, in any sense, on the will that made them, seems to me, therefore, to imply contradiction.

Clarke quotes a passage from Plato, wherein that philosopher says, according to his translation, that "as in matters of sense the reason, why a thing is visible, is not because it is seen, but it is, therefore, seen because it is visible: so in matters of natural reason and morality, that which is holy and good, is not, therefore, holy and good because it is commanded to be done, but it is therefore commanded by God because it is holy and good." If I would cavil a little, I might show that his quotation does not serve the doctor's purpose, nor prove that Plato was of his mind in asserting, that moral obligations are, primarily and originally, antecedent to the will of God, if by will be meant his determination that they should be obligatory, when he made a moral world; and if by will be meant a positive command, signified by revelation, the quotation from Plato, who knew nothing of any such revelation, is stangely absurd. Things may be seen, because they are visible, they are not visible, because they are not seen. Let it be so. Does this prove that the philosopher thought visibility, any more than vision, an eternal independent nature? Might he not think, that God made things to be seen, and creatures to see, and that visibility and vision began when he willed the physical system into existence? Thus, again, that which is good, is not such because it is commanded,

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but it is commanded because it is good. Will it follow from this expression, that good is, according to Plato, an eternal independent nature? Will it not follow as naturally, that good and evil began when God willed the moral system into existence, and that he commanded the former by the laws of their nature, at the same time when he created moral agents capable of either? This remark may serve, at least, to show how apt even the best writers are to amuse themselves, and to impose on others by a mere gingle of words, and to quote what makes against them, or does not make for them.

But now, having made this remark, I am ready to acknowledge, that Plato meant by this passage in his Euthyphro the first good, that independent nature which resides among others in his imaginary region of eternal ideas. This should be his meaning, whatever his words in this place import, to make them consistent with his doctrine, and apposite to the present dispute, wherein Plato and the Platonics run into one extreme, as Hobbes and the Hobbists into another. The former assume an eternal morality, antecedent not only to any signification, but to any actual determination of the will of God. The latter assume, that there was no moral duty, no difference, no distinction made between just and unjust, moral good and evil, till the will of man made this distinction by civil constitutions, and positive laws. It seems to me, that both these opinions tend to weaken the authority of natural religion. By the first, God published, indeed, a moral law, when he made moral agents. But he was not properly the legislator. The law existed before them, and it binds both him and them. By the second, he has not so much as the appearance of legislature. He made a moral world, indeed, but he made it in confusion, and he left it without any rule, till at last his creatures made one for themselves. He brought order out of the confusion of a physical, they out of that of a moral chaos. How preferable is the middle opinion between these two extremes, that God instituted moral obligations when he made moral agents, that the law of their nature is the law of his will, and that, how indifferent soever we may presume every thing is to him before his will has determined it to be, it becomes, after this determination, a necessary, though created nature? Such justice is in man, though in God it may be nothing more than one mode of his infinite wisdom. As long as there are men, this nature must exist. Where it will be, and what it will be, when they and this moral system are at an end, let those able persons, who know so well where and what it was before they both began to exist, determine. If I insist much on this point, I do not pretend to clear it from all the difficulties that lie in the way, neither by what is said here, nor by what has been said

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elsewhere, nor by what I may say hereafter. There are many on either side that have perplexed, and may continue to perplex, much better heads than mine. But, in the first place, I feel an insuperable repugnancy to own that any thing is independent on God; and in the next place, I am shocked at the consequences that are drawn from this doctrine.

LIX.

He who dares to affirm, that there are eternal self-existent natures independent on God, is bold enough. But what shall we say to those who dare to affirm, that these eternal natures resulting from the eternal fitnesses and unfitnesses, agreements and disagreements, proportions and disproportions of things, are absolutely and necessarily, in themselves, what they appear to be to the understandings of all intelligent beings? I do not add the exception, except those who understand things to be what they are not, because it is unnecessary to any other purpose than that of an evasion, which Clarke, like a cunning disputant, foresaw he might want and did want. What shall we say of those who think it necessary to bring proofs to show that God must know what his rational creatures may know concerning these eternal natures independent on him, and who conclude from thence, that the rule of divine and human conduct is the same? God disdains not to observe this rule, it is said, as the law of his actions, and he appeals to men for his observation of it; which matter of fact is asserted on the authority of a chapter in Ezekiel,* where the prophet, like a prophet and a poet, introduces God expostulating with the Jews in this style, and appealing to them for the equity of his proceedings. Bishop Cumberland, who is quoted by Clarke,† carries these notions still further, when he maintains in his seventh chapter,‡ with much obscure subtilty, not only that the rules of this law are the dictates of divine intelligence to God himself, but that the dominion of God over all his creatures is a right derived from these very rules, and from his wisdom, which prescribes them to him. I shall not enter on a discussion, which is not immediately necessary to the present purpose. I shall only say, that the wisdom as well as the power of God in the creation, preservation and government of all things is, without doubt, a true and joint foundation of his dominion over them, and that there seems to be no need of excluding one of the two, God's irresistible power, in order to obviate the consequences which the good bishop suspected

* Cap. 18. † Evid. p. 88. ‡ De Leg. Naturæ.

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that Hobbes intended. Let us keep out of these mists, and pursue our subject in a clearer light.

I ask then if nothing less than infinite knowledge, infinite wisdom, and absolute independence be necessary to make it impossible that the Supreme Being should be ignorant in any respect of the eternal natures, on which the eternal reason of thingis is founded, how can it be said with the least appearance of truth, that these assumed natures appear just such as they are absolutely and necessarily in themselves to the understandings of all intelligent beings, and become constantly the rule of their actions? Have we then infinite knowledge, infinite wisdom and absolute independency? The human mind apprehends clearly enough the gross differences of things in the moral system, as human sense does in the physical. But in the former as in the latter, the nicer differences are not so perceptible. We have not any knowledge of the first qualities of substances. It is enough for us, to have some knowledge of the second, of those which affect us immediately. It is in vain that we attempt to go higher, in search of scientifical knowledge, and even about those we are very liable to mistakes. Much in the same manner we know something of moral entities, allow me the use of this metaphysical word for once, as they arise in our moral system and are able to affirm many general truths concerning them. But it is in vain that we attempt to go higher in our search, or to know any thing more about them than God has shown us in the actual constitution of things, and even when we judge of them thus, and make particular applications of the general laws of our nature we are very liable to mistakes. We are not liable to these mistakes in such cases only as are very far from occurring frequently, which Clarke affirms, but we are liable to them in such as occur the most frequently, whether they relate to public or to private life. The contrary laws that legislators have made, the contrary opinions that casuists daily give in matters of morality wherein some of them must have been mistaken are evident proofs of this.

That there are things fit and unfit, right and wrong, just and unjust, in the human system, and discernible by human reason, as far as our natural imperfections admit, I acknowledge most readily. But from the difficulty we have to judge, and from the uncertainty of our judgments in a multitude of cases which lie within our bounds, I would demonstrate the folly of those who affect to have knowledge beyond them. They pretend dogmatically to deduce from abstract eternal natures what these natures require of God, whilst they are at the same time unable on many occasions to deduce from the constitution of their own system, and the laws of their own nature, with pre-

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cision and certainty, what these require of them, and what is right or wrong, just or unjust, for them to do. Clarke employs an illusion to evade this objection which would be extremely pretty, if it did not make directly against him in the present application of it, and the only application that can make it pertinent. There is justice, and injustice, as certainly as there is white and black.* But as the painter can, by diluting the two colors, not make them terminate in the midst insensibly, for these words are mere expletives and mean nothing; but as he can make them run into one another till no eye can distinguish them, so the casuist in law or divinity dilutes right and wrong, just and unjust, till no mind not even his own, can unblend and distinguish them again. If white and black were colors as immutable as they are obvious to human sight, and if justice and injustice were abstract natures immutably obvious to the human understanding, this could not be. But neither are the colors immutable, nor the natures so fixed and so obvious as to be always discerned, and in every light alike. This is what I say, and what the doctor would, if he could, deny. His learned men, his men who understand things to be what they are, not what they are not, blunder about and contradict one another in matters that are certainly objects of human reason though they presume to say that they are guided in their judgments, and directed in their conduct, by the eternal reason of things, by a rule that is common to God and them. I will quote the doctor against himself, on this occasion. I might do so, perhaps, on others. If Lycurgus had made a law to anthorise every man to rob, by violence and murder, whomsoever he met with, such a law could not have been justified. But the law which permitted the Spartan youth to steal, as absurd as it was, may bear much dispute, whether it was absolutely unjust or no. Such an opinion delivered by one, who did not reckon himself certainly among those who understand things to be what they are not, may authorise, or excuse, at least, many that have come out of the school of Loyola, and therefore I think it proper to recall another Spartan institution in this place. The helotes or slaves were made drunk in order to create an aversion to drunkenness in the youth by such ridiculous spectacles. Far be it from me and from every lover of truth, and of common sense, to wish that the race of metaphysicians and casuists should increase, or so much as continue. But since there are, have been and will be such men in all ages, it is very reasonable to wish that they may serve to the same good purpose that the helotes did at Sparta, and that their delirium, instead of

* Evid. p. 45.

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imposing on others, and even infecting many, may be at length laughed out of the world.

It may seem strange to the cool reflections of common sense, that any men, who have the use of their reason, and those especially who would be thought to have cultivated and improved it most, should attempt to persuade us that complex notions of the moral kind, for I meddle with no other, and such as we call mixed modes, are eternal natures, and independent on God, when these persons must or may know intuitively that they are dependent on man. I have said already, and I must repeat here, that the mind frames them as it has occasion for them, gives to each a name, and keeps them in store as artificial instruments of the understanding. They exist variously, in various minds, nay sometimes in the same mind; but when they exist in no mind, these eternal immutable natures exist nowhere. Yet such as they are, we are to believe them founded in the eternal fitnesses of things; we are to believe the moral attributes of God founded in them; we are to deduce from them, and from these attributes, what God is under a moral necessity of doing, and what it is his will that men should do; nay we are to prove in a circle that there is a God, because there are such natures,* and that there are such natures because there is a God. These are opinions which common sense will be hardly induced to adopt, and yet metaphysical and artificial theology teach them. As proud as we are of our rationality, certain it is that reason unmixed, uninfluenced, has less to do than we imagine in framing the opinions and directing the judgments of men.

Let us change the image, and observe that it happens to reason, as it happens to instruments ill tuned. The strings are left sometimes too lax, and are sometimes wound up too high. In one case, they give no sound at all; or one that is lifeless and heavy. In the other, the noise they make is great, it fills the ear, but it carries no true harmony to the soul. By the first we may allude to reason weak and unimproved, by the second to reason strained into all the abstractions of metaphysics, and we may discern good sense between these extremes, that is, reason at its proper tone.

There is no subject on which it is more important, that reason should be kept strictly to this tone, than that of the first philosophy, and there is no subject on which it is so liable to be let down below it, or wound up above it. I am not to speak here of the first, of that insensibility and stupidity wherein a great part of mankind is immersed, but of that activity of the mind which raises some of them so far above it. Now among these,

* Vide Cudworth of Eter. Moral.

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they who apply themselves to the first philosophy, apply themselves to the noblest objects that can demand the attention of their mind, to the existence of an all-perfect Being, to the infinite wisdom and power that are manifested in his works, and to the significations of his will, concerning the duties we owe to him, and to one another. From these different subjects arise two kinds of philosophy, divine philosophy or theology, moral philosophy or ethics. Like different branches of the same tree, they spring from the same root, and that root is the actual system of things. As high as they can be trained up from hence, they bear the genuine fruit of knowledge. But when fantastical gardeners bend the tops of the highest sprigs, like the ficus indica, down to earth; if they take root, they bear it of a bastard kind, and serve only to plant a labyrinth wherein the gardeners themselves are lost. Such fantastical gardeners our metaphysicians are. When they have acquired ideas from the actual system of things, and have carried their knowledge up from the creation to that self-existent, intelligent Being, the Creator, they disdain to reason any longer *à posteriori*. They frame an hypothesis, with much agitation of their minds, out of the ideas and notions they have acquired in this manner, and reason from it without any further regard to the phenomena. This method of philosophising has produced often nothing more than impudent assertions. Such was the theology of the Epicureans, if that may be called so: and that of the Stoics too, as much as they opposed the former, and as good theists as they were esteemed on this account, was little better.

LX.

Whilst the folly lasted among the ancient philosophers of making universal systems, and of explaining the whole scheme, order and state of things, he who had not given a great part of his system to theology, would have gained little reputation. This Plato saw, and he put theology into every thing he taught. I can easily imagine, that the same progress was made in composing these spiritual romances, that we see has been made in composing those of a different kind. Amadis of Gaul, and many more, which the niece, the curate and the barber threw out of Don Quixote's windows, and burned in his yard, were written without any regard to probability, and no man could read them with any attention, nor suffer his imagination to wander long so extravagantly, who was not as mad as the knight of La Mancha. After these writers, La Calprenade arose, like another Plato, and by mixing fiction ingeniously with the truth of history,

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he composed romances capable of amusing, and even almost of deceiving. But however this may have been, all our metaphysical writers have rather copied, than improved the Platonic systems, so that if the founder of the Academy meant to distinguish himself by his theology, he has succeeded beyond any hopes he could conceive. It prevailed in the heathen world, and it has prevailed much more in the Christian church. Particular men among the heathen embraced it for the same reason that he had to teach it, to distinguish themselves, and to acquire a name in philosophy. Or else they were determined to it, like Plotinus and Porphyry, by an enthusiastic turn of mind, which all the religions of those ages nnd countries were very proper to give, and this theology to confirm. But as soon as an entire order of men was set apart in the Christian church, to instruct the world in all matters of a divine or moral nature, and to teach a revelation little different in many instances from Platonism, this philosophy acquired a new strength, and more motives concurred to maintain it than there had been to establish it. The opinions of Plato were employed to illustrate the mysteries of the gospel, and even to recommend them to the belief of such apologists as Justin, and of such doctors as Austin. No wonder, therefore, that being consecrated in this manner, they have been propagated with Christianity in every instance where they are not directly repugnant to it. No wonder, that theology becoming one of the sciences *in lucrum exeuntes*, that is a trade, the professors of it have kept up that marvellous which is the mystery of the trade, and to which nothing could contribute more than the metaphysics of Plato. No wonder, that the doctrine, which we speak of here, should still subsist, though it does not seem agreeable to the simplicity of true theism, nor of service to morality, which would not be the duty of every man, if the principles of it could be understood by none but metaphysicians, nor the obligations of it be well explained, without an intricate deduction of arguments *à priori*.

This the trade, and nothing but the trade, makes necessary: and though we are told, that proofs *à posteriori* are no more than secondary considerations, I must confess what I have often felt, that if I had not been convinced of all the great articles of natural religion by my own reflections on the infinite wisdom and power displayed in the universe, (no part whereof, and therefore not the whole, could be conceived to be self-existent, even if it were conceived to be eternal,) on the constitution of my own nature, and on that of the system to which I belong, I should not have been so by all the fine spun argumentations *à priori*. The proofs that result immediately from such reflections as these are founded in my sensitive and intuitive knowledge,

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and to resist them I must renounce my clearest and most distinct ideas. I must do little less, I must accept a flow of mere words, thrown into the form of a demonstration, for demonstration, or I must take inadequate, incomplete, and obscure ideas and notions for such as are adequate, complete and clear, if I admit many of the proofs brought by some of our most famous writers. They present us with dim spectacles to see, what we see clearly without any, and by the natural strength of our eyes; or else to see what is not by nature, nor can be made by art visible to our internal sight. They prove as much as needs to be proved, and, therefore, as much as we are able to prove, in order to refute atheism, and to establish theism. But then they mingle this real, and connect it with so much fantastical knowledge, that they disgrace and weaken, as much as it is in their power, the former by the latter. It was this very practice which hindered the Stoics from beating the Epicureans out of the field of controversy, and from imposing silence on those babblers, the Academicians. I apprehend, that our divines have brought the same disadvantage on themselves in their disputes with atheists, to whom they would be much more formidable, if they neither pursued the practice, spoken of here, nor made that occasional alliance with them against the dispensations of Providence, which is spoken of above.

To make this conduct appear the less strange, and to take off our wonder at it, we must not only consider that the religious society is composed of as arrant men as the civil, seduced by the same affections, transported by the same passions, and that our divines have at least as much the ostentation of knowledge, superior to that of other men, as those ancient philosophers had, who pretended that philosophy was the science of all things divine and human, or the schoolmen who were ready to dispute *de omni scibili;* but we must consider further, that they assume a right which the ancient philosophers did not claim, though Pythagoras seems to have intended it, a right to instruct mankind in natural as well as in revealed religion, and have made, of the exercise of this right, a very lucrative trade. To keep this trade in repute, therefore, and themselves with it, two things have been thought necessary, and are really so. It has been thought necessary to preserve the mystery which they found established in one part by the first professors of it, and to introduce mystery into the other. The method they take serves both these purposes. They slide into the proofs of natural, what they judge necessary to impose their artificial theology. From these principles, laid out of vulgar sight, and, in truth, out of their own, they deduce even moral obligations: and thus the whole sum of religion falls under the direction of the religious society. How

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this society directs it, and to what purposes principally, appears plainly enough in the instance before us.

LXI.

Whatever may be determined about the moral fitnesses and unfitnesses of things, and the suitableness and unsuitableness of circumstances to persons, all of which are conceived to be eternal, because we cannot conceive them to have been ever otherwise than they are, certain it is that they become discernible to us in in our system alone; and that although they are immutable natures in it, from whence all our obligations arise, and may be assumed to be absolutely and in themselves eternal as well as immutable, and, therefore, independent, if philosophers please to call them so; yet we neither know, nor can know any more about them than what the actual constitution of this system shows us. In some other system we might not have had the same ideas, or having them we might not have had the same occasions of collecting them into the same complex modes. This we see happen in different countries, and what happens in different countries might surely happen in different systems. It is sufficient, therefore, to establish our moral obligations, that we consider them relatively to our own system. From thence they arise: and since they arise from thence, it must be the will of that Being who made the system, that we should observe and practise them. The assumed eternity of morality cannot make it more obligatory. Why then are such pains taken to prove it eternal? The reason is obvious. If we went no higher than our own system, the principles of it would be easily discovered, the criterion of moral good and evil, of just and unjust would be fixed, and at least there would be no need of consulting divines about it. They lead the minds of men, therefore, to contemplate objects that are out of their system, and renew the Platonic doctrine of eternal ideas, forms, essences, natures, according to which they assume that the Snpreme Being regulates his own conduct, and all his rational creatures are obliged to regulate theirs by the eternal reason of things.

They prove the existence of an all-perfect Being, the Creator and Governor of the universe, and to demonstrate his infinite wisdom and power they appeal to his works. But when they have done this, which includes the whole of natural theology, and serves abundantly all the ends of natural religion, they parcel out a divine moral nature into various attributes like the human, and determine precisely what these attributes require that God should do, to make his will conformable to the eternal

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ideas of fitness which are so many independent natures. Thus they assume that God knows after the manner of men by ideas, that his moral attributes are not barely names that we give to various manifestations of the infinite wisdom of one simple uncompounded Being, but that they are in him, what they are in us, distinct affections, dispositions, habitudes; that they are in him the very same that they are in our ideas, being derived from the same eternal natures, and known by the same eternal reason; in fine, that we have no need to judge of his moral attributes as we judge of his physical, but are able to determine what they require that he should do, without any regard to what he has done. This is in plain and unexaggerated terms the very doctrine which Clarke and other divines teach, presumptuous and profane as it is, under the disguise of modest and pious expressions. By these they frequently impose on readers who attend more to their theological cant than to their meaning, and the necessary consequences of what they advance; whilst they give other readers a just occasion to say of them what Clarke* says of some theists, it matters not at all how honorably they may seem to speak .... of God, but what .... must needs in all reason be supposed to be their true opinion.

When we reason humbly and cautiously from the phenomena we have a sure criterion to guide our judgments, and the undoubted word of God declared in his works, wherein he speaks most intelligibly to us, to authorise them. When we reason otherwise, not from the phenomena but to them, we have no such criterion to guide, nor any word but the precarious word of man to authorise our judgments. In the place of real, we substitute fantastic natures, and in the place of common sense an imaginary reason of things. This sublime metaphysical reason, which deals so much in abstract ideas, is so imaginary, and by consequence so vague, that it serves the purpose of every divine alike in all their discordant opinions. Metaphysician, I think, never convinced metaphysician; neither is there any thing so absurd which may not be made in this method problematical; and when it is once made so, the absurdity is called a demonstration. The system of Spinoza, derived at least from that of Des Cartes, is very absurd, and so are many propositions in that of Hobbes. But there are Spinozists and Hobbists still in the world, as well as Cartesians, and there might be possibly still more if metaphysical arms alone were employed against them. Let it not be said that they are men of depraved understandings, and depraved morals. This is to rail, not to argue. Their

* Quasi ego id curem quid ille aiat aut neget. Illud quæro, quid ei consentaneum sit dicere.—Cic. de Fin. lib. 2.

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parts and their morals, are, no doubt, in general as good as those of the men who oppose them; and if they conclude absurdly it is because they reason absurdly, as they reason absurdly because they pursue an absurd method; for, to bring this discourse home to the present purpose, the fault is so truly in the method, that this assumed eternal reason has misled theists as well as atheists, to such a degree that the last are not always the most impious of the two. The opinions mentioned in the last paragraph, might stand for sufficient proofs. But there are many more. He who asserts, for instance, on his notions of the eternal fitnesses and unfitnesses, and of the eternal reason of things, that the providence of God in the present state of mankind would be convicted of injustice, if there were only one innocent man unhappy, when it is notorious that there are several, or that God is unjust, because particular providences do not enough distinguish the virtuous from the wicked, is as grossly absurd, and much more impious than Hobbes, when he asserts that there is no such thing as innocence, nor guilt, till they are distinguished by civil laws, and the authority of the magistrate. He who asserts that predestination of millions to damnation, before they are capable of being either innocent or guilty, is agreeable to the divine attributes, and an exertion of jurisdiction and power not at all repugnant to the eternal fitness and reason of things, in a Being who is not the Governor alone but the Creator of all beings, and has an absolute right to dispose of them as he shall think fit, is as impious as Spinoza, who asserts one sole substance, and who denies, as in effect he did deny, any Creator and Governor of the universe.

The impious doctrine of predestination, such as it has been taught and is still taught among Christians, is softened extremely at least, and the assumed proceedings of God towards men are brought almost within the bounds of credibility, by Locke's forced exposition of the famous ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. He understands what is said of the potter, who has a power to make one vessel to honor, and another to dishonor, out of the same lump of clay, to refer to men nationally, not personally, nor with regard to an eternal state, but to the right which God has of exalting one nation and depressing another, according to his good pleasure and the merits or demerits of such political bodies. This sense may be admitted, whilst that of an universal and absolute predestination of every individual, such as it is taught, deserves to be rejected with horror. It may be admitted the better, perhaps, because it is conformable enough to the sanctions of the law of nature. According to these which regard mankind in general, as the law was given to mankind in general, virtue tends to the happiness, and vice

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to the misery of their several societies: and there seems, therefore, no great presumption in assuming that God does in any particular case, by a particular dispensation, that which is agreeable to the general tenor of his providence, and to the natural course of things. But it is impious to suppose that he acts, relatively to particular men, against the general tenor of his providence, and in a manner that shows partiality in his favors, cruelty in his judgments, and an arbitrary spirit in all his proceedings, directly opposite to that spirit of impartiality and benignity, which makes his sun to rise, and his rain to fall, on the just and unjust. Mr. Locke's exposition of St. Paul's text is in the first of these cases. St. Austin's, and that of many divines who had once the vogue of orthodoxy, is in the second. In what sense the apostle understood his own doctrine, I presume not to determine. Thus much is certain, if he understood it as Locke did, he reasoned very rabbinically, when he quoted the preference given to Jacob over a much better man, over Esau, and the deliverance of the Israelites, and the destruction of the Egyptians by God for the glory of his name, in order to conclude *à fortiori*, that the same God might, by virtue of the same power, reject the Jews, who were literally the seed of Abraham, for refusing to acknowledge the Messiah, and call the gentiles who were figuratively his seed, for consenting to acknowledge him.

I have said already, how difficult it is to reconcile the scheme of particular providences to the general course of nature: and he who considers the many forced suppositions that ingenious men have made, to get over the difficulty, will be only the more convinced that it is insuperable. This scheme is, indeed, very unnecessary to those who hold an absolute predestination, and since they leave neither freedom of will in man, nor what is called contingency in the course of events, they seem to anticipate any want of particular providences by supposing somewhat still less conceivable. We comprehend as little God's manner of knowing, as we do his manner of being, and we should, therefore, presume to reason no more about one, than about the other. But these men, applying their ideas of human to the divine knowledge, maintain that God could not foreknow certainly what is to happen, if he did not make it necessary and certain by pre-ordaining that it should happen. So they argue on their notion of prescience. Now, it seems, and it has seemed to me ever since I turned my thoughts to subjects of this kind, that the whole system of predestination may be blown up by the change of an improper word. Let us talk no more of prescience, nor imagine things future relatively to God, as they are relatively to man. Let us acknowledge his omniscience, to

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which the future is like the present, and we may conceive, without any extraordinary effort of mind, that he knows, though he does not pre-ordain, in the sense of predestinating, the future.— If we persuade ourselves of this great truth, that the whole series of things is, at all times, actually present to the divine mind, we may say as properly that God knows things because they are actual to him, and not that they are actual to him because he knows them, or much less pre-ordains them; as we say, that things are seen by us because they are visible, and not that they are visible because they are seen by us. They, who talk so much of prescience and predestination, would do well to consider, whether it be not more reasonable to think in this manner, than to adopt all the absurd, as well as impious, consequences that flow from their hypothesis, according to which there must be not one general system of nature, but as many natural and moral systems, as there are rational creatures, and the providence of God must be employed to carry on this aggregate of systems so distinctly and so steadily, that the innocence and happiness of some, and the guilt and misery of others, may be effectually secured, agreeably to their several predestinations.

LXII.

The fact, that there are such particular providences as have been assumed, which would be so many miracles, in the strict sense of the word, if they were real, cannot be proved; unless we accept for proofs, in an age when miracles are scarce pretended out of your church, and scarce believed in it, all the ridiculous stories that passed in times of ignorance and superstition. I said that particular providences would be miracles, if they were real, and such they would be strictly, whether they were contrary to the established course of nature or not; for the miracle consists in the extraordinary interposition as much as in the nature of the thing brought to pass. In one case, there could be no doubt of such an extraordinary and miraculous interposition. In the other, doubts might arise, the opinions of men might be divided, and yet the miracle be as real in one as in the other.— Nay, the reality might be made evident enough to remove these doubts by the occasions, by the circumstances, by the repetition of it on similar occasions, and with similar circumstances; and, above all, by this circumstance, that the assumed particular providence was a direct answer to particular prayers, and acts of devotion offered up to procure it. Should fire rain down from heaven to burn one city, and the walls of another fall at the sound of the besieger's trumpets, should a destroying angel

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put one army to death in a night, and the sun stand still to give time for the entire defeat of another, neither the besiegers nor the besieged, the victorious nor the vanquished, could fail to see the omnipotent hand of God in these events. Should abundant showers descend from the clouds, after a long drought, or fair weather succeed a wet season, though nothing is more in the ordinary course of nature than these phenomena, they would be esteemed particular providences, very reasonably, at Paris, if they happened as constantly as the shrine of Saint Genevieve is carried in procession to procure one or the other.

Innumerable cases of these kinds may be put hypothetically; but happily for mankind, experience furnishes no authentic examples of the first sort, nor any well enough ascertained to become proofs of the second. All the instances that can be brought of providences, which men assume to be particular, are so very like to the events which happen in the ordinary course of things, that they fall under the head of such as are problematical, and as are made particular by nothing but the voluntary applications of them. I say happily it is so, for if it was otherwise, if providences were directed according to the different desires, and even wants of men equally well entitled to the divine favor, the whole order of nature, physical and moral, would be subverted, and the affairs of mankind would fall into the utmost confusion. The laws of gravitation, for instance, must be sometimes suspended, and sometimes their effect must be precipitated. The tottering edifice must be kept miraculously from falling, whilst innocent men lived in it, or passed under it; and the fall of it must be as miraculously determined to crush the guilty inhabitant or passenger. The free will of man, which no one can deny that he has without lying or renouncing his intuitive knowledge, and which was so much regarded by God, that we are told he suffered Adam to fall, and to involve all mankind in his guilt, rather than restrain it for a moment, for a moment would have saved us from original sin, this free will must be often not only restrained, but determined irresistibly by still whispers, secret suggestions and sudden influences.

How all this can be effected, and especially in compliances with the wants and petitions of men so different and so repugnant to one another, is not only hard to say, but the very supposition may seem to imply contradiction with what we know of the constitution of things, and with our clearest and most distinct ideas. The affairs of men are connected by so many various relations, that the particular providenee which puts a force on the mechanical laws of nature, and on the freedom of the human will, must do this very often, not in one or two instances alone, but in a multitude, to have its effect in one. Again. The cir-

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cumstances of individuals, the public conjunctures wherein numbers are involved, and the merits and demerits of particular men, as well as of collective bodies, are so nearly alike, and they return so often to be equally objects of these supposed providences, that no one who does not think himself at liberty to affirm or deny anything that his precarious hypothesis requires, will dare to pronounce where these providences have been, or should have been employed, and where not. The scheme, if it were true, would be universal in extent, and continual in time; from whence these great absurdities arise, that the world would be governed by miracles till miracles lost their name, that the established order of natural causes and effects would be subverted, that the general rule would be absorbed in the exceptions to it, or that God would govern his human creatures by two rules that do not consist very well together, since by one of them the wants and the petitions of these creatures would be submitted to one common providence which carried on the affairs of the world, according to the first constitution and original laws of it: and by the other, this common providence would break, if I may say so, into a multitude of particular providences, for the supply of these wants and the grant of these petitions, every one of which is an appeal to the second rule of government against the first.

Among other attempts which have been made to solve these difficulties, and to reconcile the assumed scheme to the actual and visible, it has been urged, that God may possibly have so ordered the whole series of things, from the commencement to the consummation of this system,* that all particular cases may have been provided for in the original design, that they may be parts of it, and, therefore, consistent with it. It has been urged further, that the particular natures and actions of all the sons of Adam having been known to God, it is very possible that he may introduce them into the world at such times, and in such places and circumstances, that they may be, even according to the general course of nature, the instruments or the objects of particular providences. These are very arbitrary suppositions, and such surely as give little satisfaction to the mind. Without entering further than they deserve into the examination of them, it may be said, and it may be shown, that they come up very nearly to that of an absolute predestination, and are at least as whimsically invented to this purpose, as that of a pre-established harmony is to another. The example of the planets, which is brought to illustrate one of these hypotheses, will not appear extremely apposite. They are disposed so as to perform their dance regu-

* Relig. of Nat. Delin.

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larly, in various conjunctions and oppositions, without any new impressions, or any alterations in the laws of motion. But is this the case of moral and free agents? The planets make their revolutions, and maintain their order, by the invariable laws of their system, which nothing but the will of God can alter. They have, in themselves, no principle that can determine their motions in contradiction to these laws. But whether we suppose situations and conjunctures prepared for men, or men for situations and conjunctures, they may act, by the freedom of their will, against all these preparations and destinations in spite of time, place, and circumstance. But God foresaw that they would not, says the metaphysician, and you assert that God may foresee future events without pre-ordaining them. Yes, foresee, or rather see, as he knows all the most contingeut events that happen in the course of his general providence, but not provide for particular cases, nor determine the existence of particular men, in the manner assumed, without pre-ordaining. Their voluntary actions may coincide with an unpredestinated state of things. But that certain ideal men should come into existence to perform these voluntary actions in such an unpredestinated conjuncture precisely, is a very evident predestination, and as much a particular providence as if these dispositions, and these conjunctures, had been the effects of many miraculous interpositions.

It will be of little service to the scheme of particular providences to say, like Wollaston, that there may be incorporeal, at least invisible beings, of intellects and powers superior to men, and capable of mighty things; and that these beings may be the ministers of God, and the authors of many of these providences; for that there may be, is no proof that there are such beings. To affirm that we stand in the highest rank of intellectual creatures, would be extreme folly; and to deny that there may be a chain of intelligence, through several systems, up from man, would be to contradict without reason, what reason and analogy render very probable. That such creatures may be the inhabitants of other planets, and dispersed in these habitations, through the universe, is a notion so favored by appearances, and so agreeable to the majesty of God, and to the immensity of his works, that no reasonable man will reject, in the present improved state of astronomy, what some of the most ancient astronomers suspected. But the difference is great between adopting an opinion thus founded, and the opinions of ancient astrologers, and of the knaves or madmen who professed theurgic magic. Yet these were the first philosophers who invented such beings as are still assumed. They imposed them on the East, and the East has imposed them on the West. They were not a little embarrassed about their habitations. They placed some in heaven. These

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were the angels, or messengers, whom the Supreme Being employed on the most important occasions; and, not to enter into the more perplexed and obscure parts of this doctrine, the greatest number of them were demons and genii, who rambled about in imaginary spaces, the intermundia of Epicurus, but principally in our atmosphere, that they might be at hand to take care of men and to direct the conduct of human affairs. But now, admitting that there are such beings, and that they are thus employed; I would ask, do they act by the immediate command of God, or do they not? If you, who defend the scheme of particular providences, say that they do; you leave the matter just where it was, and God governs the world no longer by his general providence alone, but mediately, if not immediately, by particular providences likewise, so little consistent with it that they would be useless, if they were not wrought in opposition to it, or to supply the defects of it. If you say that they do not; under how strange a government do you place mankind, when you give any share of it to these beings, and suppose that they exercise it in proper places, and according to their greater abilities!

I neither say, nor think, that divines mean to blaspheme. God forbid that I should be as uncharitable as they are. But this I say, that he who follows them cannot avoid presumption and profaneness, and must be much on his guard to avoid blas phemy. Consider, under one view, their whole proceeding. God made the world, they say, for the sake of man, and he made man only to indulge his goodness in communicating happiness to so noble a creature. God preserves the world he has made. His providence presides over all his works, animate and inanimate, and principally over men, those rational beings whom he has created in his own image. But this providence is general, and, therefore, insufficient to answer all the purposes of his goodness and his justice, in an immense variety of contingent events, and with regard to the merits and demerits of every man. It is essential, therefore, to these, and especially to the last, that there should be particular providences to take care of rational beings in every particular case which there are not, and to make a due distribution of good and evil among them constantly, because any one instance to the contrary is inconsistent with God's moral attributes, and shakes the belief of his existence. He governs, therefore, by particular providences, and provides by them for particular cases that are not provided for in the administration of a general providence. Be it so. All you ask is granted. Are you reconciled to the justice of God's government? Are you satisfied? By no means, reply these divines, and such theists as Wollaston. These particular providences are exercised so rarely, so secretly, or some how or other so ineffectually, that his

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government continues liable to the same charge of injustice, and cannot be reconciled to his attributes, and to the eternal reason of things, without the help of an hypothesis, which it is but reasonable we should make to distinguish ourselves from the atheistical tribe, and to justify that God, whom we accused in concert with them, whilst our alliance lasted, and as far as the conditions of it extended.

After this, will it not be permitted me to say, that if these men do not plaspheme directly, little less than blasphemy, nay blasphemy itself is deduced directly by their allies from the principles they lay down? I will say this at least, that they talk profanely, and argue presumptuously, in very devout and sometimes very modest terms. Will it not be permitted me to say, that these men seem to be in the kingdom of God, what the ringleaders of faction are in a state? Men would be angels, and we see in Milton that angels would be gods. The pretensions of men are exorbitant, yet all they demand is presumed to be of right, and whatever falls short of their demands to be a denial of a right founded in the original institution of his government by God; for of any original contract or covenant between him and man, except that which the Jews boast he made with their ancestors, we never heard. Though divines talk sometimes of a covenant, which they are pleased to call of grace. To finish this allusion, let me add that when factions devise expedients to redress the grievances of which they complain, they are commonly such as seem to redress, rather than redress, and as make the sovereign little amends for all the violence they have offered to his prerogative, and for all they have said and done against him.

LXIII.

It is high time that we should have recourse to a better authority than that of man, to the authority of God himself; that we should consider how he has made us, and in what circumstances he has placed us; that we should declare what he has done to be agreeable to his infinite wisdom, and to all his other perfections, because he has done it; and that we should prepare our minds to be grateful and resigned. To lead us then into this track of thought, let it be observed that the phenomena of nature, the greatest and the most minute, establish the doctrine of final causes, and, therefore, the intelligence of the first cause, by innumerable proofs which are at all times obvious to our senses. Many of these proofs amount to geometrical certainty; since a multitude of things, which might be made in manners

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and placed in positions almost infinite, are so made, so placed, so contrived that they are visibly appropriated to the particular uses to which they serve, and to no other. If the scheme of particular providences was supported by proofs like these, no reasonable man could doubt of the truth of it. But it is not so supported. The facts are often wholly uncertain, or mingled up with fabulous circumstances, or distinguished, without reason, from those which happen under the direction of a general providence, by superstition and artifice, so that proofs of the falsity of particular providences are in proportion as frequent as those of the reality of final causes. We are justified, therefore, in affirming one, and in not affirming the other, whilst they who affirm both are justified by their proceeding in affirming neither. They affirm the doctrine of final causes often on proofs which the phenomena contradict, and which the doctrine established independently of them does not want. They affirm that of particular providences without any proofs which the phenomena furnish.

The two assumed propositions I have mentioned so often, that man is the final cause of the world, and that the communication of happiness to him is the final cause of his creation, are most certainly false, as the scheme of particular providences that force the laws of nature is no doubt, and as that may be which supposes these providences exercised in a manner agreeable to these laws. That the world is fitted in many respects to be the habitation of men, or that men are fitted for this habitation, is true. But will it follow, even from the first, that the world, therefore, was made for the sake of man, any more than it will follow that it was made for any other species of animals, for of all whom, according to their several natures, it is equally well fitted, and for of all whom we may believe on this account, very reasonably, that it was made as well as for us? It is as well fitted for Bownce as for you, with respect to physical nature, and with respect to moral nature, Bownce has little to do beyond hearkening to the still whispers, the secret suggestions, and the sudden influences of instinct. In the works of men, the most complicated schemes produce, very hardly and very uncertainly, one single effect. In the works of God, one single scheme produces a multitude of different effects, and answers an immense variety of purposes. Whatever was the final cause of the world, whatever motive (for we must speak after the manner of men) the first cause had to create it, which motive could not arise from any thing without himself, and must be, therefore, resolved into his mere will; we conceive easily that infinite wisdom which determined, and infinite power which executed the plan of the universe, had some secondary, some inferior regard, in making

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this and every other planet, to all the creatures that were to inhabit them, though neither any of these creatures nor all of them were, in a proper sense, the final causes for which these planets were created. When we look down on other animals, we discern a distance, but a very measurable distance between us and them. When we look up to our common Creator, the distance is immeasurable, for it is infinite. In the first view, as we have some superiority, we are ready to claim a preference due to us over them. But in the second, and relatively to God, we can boast of no such claim. As the distance is infinite from them, so it is from us, to him; for there are no degrees of more or less in infinite.

This reflection alone should have kept philosophers within the bounds of modesty. But neither this reflection, nor a great many others, which inward consciousness and outward observation suggest, have been able to do it. No men have reasoned so dogmatically about the divine nature and perfections, nor have supposed them so much on a level with human conceptions, as the philosophers and divines who have talked the most, and the most inconsisently by consequence, of their incomprehensibility. Some of the heathens asserted the soul of man to be a participation of the divinity, or an emanation from it. Christians have been very little more modest. St. Austin taught that the soul of man is the highest of created beings, and that there is nothing superior, except the Creator himself: and the philosophers, we speak of here, teach that God's manner of knowing, a secret as impenetrable as his manner of being, is the same as ours, that he knows by ideas, and that without them he could not have made, nor could govern what he has made.* The vanity of being rational, a title they ascribe to God as well as to man, turns their heads. But what is their rationality? The first principles of all their knowledge are not common to God and them, but to them and to the beasts of the field. The improvements they make, on the same principles, beyond their fellow-creatures, are owing to this, that they have better, and, perhaps, more intellectual faculties than the others, as the others have better, and, perhaps, more corporeal senses than they have. The reason of this difference seems to be, that such improvements in knowledge are necessary to the well-being of men, to their station, and to their destination, as are not necessary to those of other animals. This reason will appear, I think, true, if we consider that as far as these improvements are necessary to the purposes I have mentioned, they are easy; the knowledge we acquire by them is real, and rationality is a perfection in our nature: whereas in proportion to the attempts

* Vide Maleb.

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we make to carry them beyond this point, they grow harder and harder, our knowledge grows less and less real, till it terminates in mere conjecture, or in manifest error, and this very rationality becomes an imperfection in our nature, or gives, as it gave to Cotta, a pretence to call it so.

This might be illustrated by many examples, by that of religion particularly. Man is a religious as well as a social creature, made to know and to adore his Creator, to discover and to obey his will, to conform himself, not to an imaginary abstract reason of things, but to that reason which results from his own constitution, and from the constitution of the system to which he belongs, whereby many things indifferent in themselves and no way obligatory on other animals, cease to be indifferent, and are obligatory on him. Thus far the principles of religion, and the duties of it are easy to be known; and if the one were known, and the other known and practised only thus far, it would have, in great measure at least, its genuine effect. But men have not been content with this knowledge. Artificial theology and superstition have perplexed the principles, and overloaded the duties of it, till it is grown unintelligible, and in many instances impracticable, or unfit to be practised.

Greater powers of reason and means of knowledge have been measured out to us than to other animals, that we might be able to fulfil the superior purposes of our destination, whereof religion is, no doubt, the chief. But they have been measured out to us thus far, and no further, whilst in those inferior purposes (for such we ought to esteem them) that regard animal life, other creatures have by nature the advantage over men. The elevation and pre-eminence of our species consist in the former alone. But though they are great, they do not take us out of the class of animality; and the metaphysician who fancies himself wrapped up in pure intellect, and even abstracted from his material part, will feel hunger and thirst, and roar out in a fit of the stone. I am far from thinking the condition of mankind as unhappy as the same writers, who maintain that the world was made for the sake of man, and man merely to have happiness communicated to him, represent it to be. But yet I am persuaded, and so must every man be who is capable of reflection, that his condition would have been very different from what it is, if the hypothesis of these men had been true. In short, without regard to the exaggerations of the elder Pliny, who makes the human state as despicable as he can, we shall find sufficient reason to say, on our own observation of the progress of human life, and not of the beginnings of it only, how mad are men when they entertain such high opinions of their own elevation, and think themselves born to be proud! "Heu

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dementiam ab his initiis existimantium ad superbiam se genitos!"*

LXIV.

Though God does not govern the world by particular providences, and though it seems to be contrary to what infinite wisdom has established that he should, yet are we not, nor has mankind ever been without God, and the evident marks of his providence in the world. Look back, as far as history and tradition give you any light. Consider the present course of things in the physical and moral systems. Which way soever you turn yourself, you will meet with God, "Deum videbis occurrentem tibi,"† and may say to the divine what the good man, whom Socrates mentions in his ecclesiastical history, said to the philosopher,‡ my book is the nature of things, which is always at hand when I am desirous to read the words of God: meus liber, O philosophe, est natura rerum, quæ quidem præsto est quoties Dei verba legere libuerit." What we read in that book is undoubtedly the word of God, and in that we shall find no foundation for a scheme, like this, of particular providences. We shall find that the course of things has been always the same; that national virtue and national vice have always produced national happiness and national misery in a due proportion, and are, by consequence, the great sanctions, as it is said above, of the law of nature. We shall find that these sanctions are sufficient, in terrorem, to the collective bodies of men, and that the punishment of individuals is left to the discipline of those laws which every society makes for its own sake, and which are suggested by the law of nature, to prevent, by private punishments, the growth of public misfortunes. We shall find that he, who made, preserves the world, and governs it on the same principles, and according to the same invariable laws which he imposed at first. Invariable they are, no doubt: and that difference of events, which gives occasion to the distinction of ordinary and extraordinary, is nothing more than the natural effect of them. Comets, nay eclipses, were thought to be extraordinary apparitions that portended extraordinary events, till experience and observation made them familiar, and astronomers began to calculate their returns.

The laws we speak of are so truly invariable, that the same face of nature and the same course of things have been preserved from the first, in heaven and on earth, under the direction of the

* Plin. l. vii. † Sen. de Benef. ‡ L. iv.

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same general providence. The celestial bodies moved in the same order five or ten thousand years ago that they move now. The inanimate parts of our globe, the vegetable and the animal world have been constituted, maintained, and propagated in the same manner; and whatever difference the most ancient patriarchs, or the first of men, if they were to come into life again, might find in the works of art, they would find none in those of nature: so that, when a great philosopher says that Adam would find a new world, he must be understood to mean that the first of men would find a great deal more of the old one discovered, as we say that Columbus found a new world when he discovered America. These laws, though they are invariable, are general too, and as such they admit of much contingency. Matter, as we conceive it, is purely passive, can act no otherwise than it is acted upon according to the first impressions of motion that were given by the first mover, and is, therefore, less liable to contingency, because more immediately, and more absolutely under the influence of those laws by which the motion of it, the first of second causes, is continued. The first gleams of thought appear in our animal system, and with them the powers of willing, and of beginning motion. Thought improves, and the exercise of these powers grows more frequent, and more considerable, as the system rises. As it rises, therefore, there is more room for contingency of events under the general and invariable laws imposed on the whole kind, or on the particular species. But in no species is there so much room of this sort as in the human. Other animals seem to act more agreeably to the laws, each of his own nature, and more uniformly than man, by that secret determination of the will which is knowable only by its effects, like every other kind of force, which we call instinct, and which may answer in natural influences, to what the divines call grace in those that they suppose to be supernatural. This influence, whatever it be, is, I think, more extensive and more durable in other animals than in us. It serves them in more particulars, and seems to have the sole direction of their conduct through life. It has, at least, the principal direction, even in those of them in whom we perceive some glimmerings of rationality, and some partial indications of a moral nature.

But now in man, instinct does no more than point out the first rudiments of the law of his nature. Reason does, or should do the rest. Reason, instructed by experience, shows the law and the sanctions of it, which are as invariable and as uniform as the law; for in all the ages of the world, and among all the societies of men, the well-being or the ill-being of these societies, and, therefore, of all mankind has borne a constant proportion to the observation or neglect of it. God has given to his human

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creatures the materials of physical and moral happiness, if I may say so, in the physical and moral constitution of things. He has given them faculties, and powers necessary to collect and apply these materials, and to carry on the work, of which reason is the architect, as far as these materials, these faculties, these powers, and the skill of this architect admit. This the Creator has done for us. What we shall do for ourselves he has left to the freedom of our elections; for free-will seems so essential to rational beings, that I presume we cannot conceive any such to be without it, though we easily conceive them restrained in the execution of what they will. This plan is that of divine wisdom; and whatever our imaginations may suggest, we know nothing more particular, and, indeed, nothing at all more of the constitution and order of the human system, nor of the dispensations of Providence than this.

Agreeably to this plan, men have been every where intent to procure to themselves all the physical comforts of life, and solicitous to defend themselves against all the physical evils. In the first, they have succeeded everywhere so well that they enjoy, not only the necessaries and comforts, but the luxuries of life; for there is the luxury of Scythians as well as of Sybarites, of Americans as well as of Europeans, and of the cottage as well as of the palace. In the second, as in the first, and in every human invention and institution, there is something that is imperfect, something that falls short of the end that we propose, by defect of knowledge, or by defect of power. But even in this, the success of mankind has been great; since they have found means universally, even the most savage have found them, to prevent or to cure many of those physical evils to which they stand exposed, and to alleviate those which they can neither prevent nor cure. This has been done variously and by slow degrees, but it has been always doing, and distempers were cured and many physical evils averted before the great improvements of experimental philosophy were made. They are so, even now, in countries where these improvements were never heard of.

Agreeably to the same plan, moral good has been promoted, moral evil has been restrained, and the general state of mankind has been greatly improved in this respect, as well as in the other; though in this respect many more and more frequent contingencies are to be guarded against than in the other, because they arise in the moral system from the most uncertain principle imaginable, the free will of man: and in the other they are such alone as certain laws and an established order of things admit. Physical contingencies are rather apparent than real. But moral contingencies are very real, and yet they are guarded

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against so well, and the principles and practice of morality are so well maintained in the several societies of men that they produce no great disorders in these, and there on the whole vastly more innocent than guilty persons.

LXV.

I am not unacquainted with the various refinements of ingenious men, about the freedom of the human will. Some of them have assumed it to be a freedom from external compulsion only, and not from internal necessity. Others have assumed it to be a freedom from both; and there are those who assign not only freedom to the will, but a natural indifference, which is not excited to choose, because an object is agreeable antecedently to the choice, but chooses for the pleasure it finds in choosing, and makes the object agreeable by this choice.* The first seem to me to leave neither contingency, nor virtue, nor vice in the world. They establish an universal necessity, of one sort at least. The last seem to me to transfer in some sort to man, what belongs to God. There is an agent, no doubt, who makes things good and agreeable by choosing them, and who is not determined to his choice *ab extra*, by any pre-existent goodness in objects. But this agent is not that passive creature man, who acts, when he does act, according to the contingent impressions of outward objects on him, or according to those remote objects which his imagination represents to him; for in this scene alone, and a large one it is, free will does, and I suppose can, exercise itself. The second opinion is so evidently true, that I cannot conceive it would have been liable to any contradiction; if philosophers had not done in this case, what they do in many, if they had not rendered what is clear, obscure by explanations, and what is certain, problematical by engraftments.

Into these subtile and perplexed disquisitions I have no design to enter with them. I write to you, and for you; and you would think yourself little obliged to me, if I took the pains of explaining in prose, what you would not think it necessary to explain in verse, and in the character of a poetical philosopher, who may dwell in generalities. But besides this, I have another reason, which would weigh with me on every other as well as on this occasion. I fear to go out of my depth, in sounding imaginary fords that are real gulfs, and wherein many of the tallest philosophers have been drowned, whilst none of them ever got over to the science they had in view. Here even

* Vid. King de Orig. Mali.

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Locke, that cautious philosopher, was lost; and here they who have followed and refuted him, like those who went before them all, have succeeded no better; so true is that saying of Montagne, when men attempt to carry knowledge far, "tout finit dans l'éblouissement," the sight is dazzled, and nothing is seen clearly.

Instead of consulting these writers, therefore, let us consult ourselves. Let us at least attend to them no further, than our inward reflection and our intuitive knowledge confirm their opinions. The material world is an immense scene. Numbers of men, and numbers of ages have been employed to acquire knowledge; and, where this has fallen short, to make hypotheses, sometimes useful, concerning the constitution of it, and the laws according to which bodies act on bodies, in order to apply them to the service of mankind. No man's experience can instruct him sufficiently in this science, even for the most ordinary uses of life. Every one must lean on that of others, the illiterate universally, and the most learned in many parts; since no one of them is able to embrace and cultivate alike the whole. But knowledge of the intellectual world is more confined as to the principles of it, and, therefore, less confined as to the persons equally capable of acquiring all the real knowledge that is to be acquired about it. I say, real knowledge; because hypotheses, which are often admitted very reasonably and very usefully in one case, have no pretence to be admitted in the other. Physical hypotheses, which go beyond knowledge, but are founded on it, may be admitted, not only because we must accept probability for certainty on many occasions always, but because when we accept it in these cases, we accept it, as it were, *pro interim*. None of the phenomena stand in opposition to the present probability, and they all lie open to future discoveries; so that by the same means, by which we attain to this probability, we may attain hereafter to certainty, and, in the mean time, the former can be convicted of no error. The hypotheses of metaphysicians are very different from these. They are often framed in direct contradiction to the phenomena: and if they are so once, they must be so always; for the phenomena are, in this case, always the same, no new ones arise, and there are no means of further discoveries. The phenomena of our intellectual system lie in a narrow compass for the whole system is within us, and we have but to turn our eyes inward to have intuitive knowledge of it. Moral philosophers may draw different corollaries from the known operations of the mind, determinations of the will, and motives of human actions: but nothing can be more futile than the attempts of metaphysicians, to show, by tedious abstract reasoning, what the internal phenomena in themselves are, instead of appealing to our intuitive conscious knowledge

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of them. They would not be a jot more ridiculous, if they attempted to demonstrate, most philosophically, to a man whose eyes are open, what those objects are which he sees or may see, at a due distance, and through a proper medium.

I have said something here and there in these minutes, already, concerning the principles of our moral system, in order to show how it may be and how it has been improved, and to justify the providence of God on this head, as well as on that of our physical system. In this place, let it be observed to the same purpose again, that, although the human will be free from external compulsion and internal necessity, yet it is liable to be determined often by sensible and intellectual affections; for I shall not make the distinction Seneca makes, between affections and the principia præludentia affectibus. I am conscious that this is so, for I am conscious that I have determined too often, in compliance with my appetite, and in favor of pleasure, regardless of happiness, not only against my reason in general, but against the immediate, the instantaneous act of my understanding: as I am likewise conscious that I have determined sometimes, and I wish I had done so much oftener, in compliance with my reason, and in favor of happiness, not only against my appetite, but against my appetite excited by an immediate object. I am not more certain that I exist, than I am that all this is true: and since it is true of me, I conclude that it is so, in some degree or other, of all mankind. Now, amidst the contingencies that must arise from this constitution of every individual in the complicated affairs of his life, and in that diversity of relations in which he stands, I need not go about to prove, that the odds will be always on the side of appetite, from which affections arise, as affections grow up afterwards into passions, which reason cannot quite subdue in the strongest minds, and by which she is perpetually subdued in the weakest. Had the all-wise Creator implanted in every man a moral sense, which may be acquired in some sort by long habits of virtue, and the warmth of true philosophical devotion, but which it is whimsical to assume to be natural; had he done more, had he determined men to the practice of virtue, as he has to the preservation of their beings, by irresistible instinct; or had he appointed particular providences for particular men, to make them good and to reward them for being so; there would have been in the freedom of human will no chance for immorality, or rather this freedom would have been taken from us in all occurrences of a moral nature by the internal necessity of such an instinct, or the external compulsion of such providences. But no one of these methods, which self-sufficient philosophers have thought it necessary that God should take to secure the moral happiness of

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mankind, by securing in all events the morality of individuals, has appeared necessary to the purposes of divine wisdom. It is plain by the whole course of God's Providence, that he regards his human creatures collectively, not individually, how worthy soever every one of them deems himself to be a particular object of the divine care. He has given them indifferently, and in common, the means of arriving at happiness in their moral, as in their physical state; and has left it to them to improve these means, that they may obtain this end.

In this respect he has dealt with them alike in both. But the progress of these improvements is very different. It goes from individuals to collective bodies in one case, and from collective bodies to individuals in the other. Particular men have made discoveries, and invented arts beneficial to the whole species. The generality has adopted them. Their immediate utility has maintained them in practice, and appetite and reason have conspired to set the undivided force of self-love on their side. But our improvements in morality have always had, and must always have a very different progress. Some few particular men may discover, explain, and press upon others, by advice and example, the moral obligations that are incumbent on all. This alone will have little effect, and our moral state will be little improved by it. This improvement, therefore, in themselves and in others is not trusted to the reason of particular men. It is a principal object of the universal reason of mankind. For this purpose governments have been instituted, laws have been made, customs have been established, children have been trained up to morality by education, and men have been deterred from immorality by various punishments which human justice inflicts. When these means are employed effectually in any society of men, the moral state of that society is happy. When they are employed ineffectually, which must be always the fault of those to whom government is committed, the state of that society is miserable. Individuals are the objects of human justice; societies of men, of divine justice. When the former is not exercised effectually, the latter is; and no physical causes produce their effects more naturally, nor more surely, than general depravity produces general misery.

LXVI.

Such is the constitution of things, and such the divine economy in the government of mankind. God has given us the desire of happiness and the means of attaining to it. He has given us faculties sufficient to discover, and to improve these means.

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What could we ask more of a beneficent Creator? Let us adore his goodness, and his justice (if we will ascribe our ideas of moral attributes to him) as well as his wisdom and his power. Let us give him thanks for bestowing existence upon us, in the system to which we belong; whilst profane antitheistical writers refuse to own, that he himself exists, unless there be another. Our state, in this world, is a state not of pure, but of mixed, happiness. As we are material beings, we are subject to generation and corruption, and to many physical evils that arise necessarily from this constitution. As we are intellectual beings, but endowed with very imperfect intelligence, we are liable to much error, and to many moral evils, that arise from hence, and that we bring on one another. If this were our case, without any thing more, the human state would be very deplorable indeed; and that it is our case we should be induced to think, if we gave credit to the partial representations of divines and atheists; one of whom defame, and the other deny, the Supreme Being. But our own experience, our own reflections, and, above all, the excellent writings of those who apply natural philosophy to confirm and improve natural religion, will lead us to God, by sensible demonstrations, much more strongly than the others can lead us from him by metaphysical jargon, and theological declamation. In short, however mixed, and however moderate the general happiness of mankind may be, it is real, animal happiness; and he who affirms absolute non-existence preferable to existence in such a state as ours, like the persons Pliny alleges,* "qui non nasci optimum censerent aut quam ocyssimè aboleri," scarcely deserves an answer. Let philosophers carry on this dispute as long as they please, it must always terminate in a question not hard to resolve; "whether it was most agreeable to the wisdom of the Creator, to make the world and man as they are made; or to make the former a wheel unfit to roll in its place, in the great machine of the universe, and the latter a creature so superior to his actual rank in the scale of intelligent beings, that this rank must have been void, and the scale imperfect?"

That there are other material intelligent creatures, inhabitants of other planets, we have great reason to believe, and none to doubt. As they may be superior to us in their nature and objects, in their several degrees less unworthy of the divine munificence, so their happiness may be greater than ours. Yet these creatures, even the noblest of them, must be liable to some inconveniences at least, both physical and moral. Angels and glorified saints, who are said to live with God, and, therefore, above the reach of those effects of matter and motion which are

* Nat. Hist. l. vii.

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felt in other systems, can be alone exempt from the first: and whether these beings, who are finite still however glorified, can be exempt from the latter, theology must determine; it is not an object of common sense. Nay, theology has already determined it, in the case of those angels and archangels, who were driven from heaven for their ambition and rebellion against God. Some divines there are, who assume that the expulsion of these superior beings made room for men; that the earth is a nursery for heaven; to which the elect, a competent number of whom will be completed before the end of the world, are to be admitted: and that as creatures of a lower class are encouraged to better their condition by a right use of their faculties, according to this economy, so those of a higher, the highest of created beings, are deterred from the abuse of theirs. They may abuse these faculties then: and there may be moral evil, even in heaven.* But however all this may be, since infinite wisdom designed that there should be various orders of intellectual beings in the plan of the universe, differently placed, differently constituted, and some superior to others; it will follow, that nothing can be more absurd than the complaints of creatures who are in one of these orders, that they are not in another, if, in truth, there are any creatures, except men, unreasonable enough to make such complaints. They complain of their own constitution, and of the constitution of the system wherein they are placed, as loudly as if the Supreme Being was obliged in justice to give them their choice, in some inconceivable manner, how and where they would exist, before he made them to exist. They complain of the uniform conduct of that general providence which is over all his works, as if his justice, repugnant, in this case, to his wisdom, required that he should govern creatures, whom he brought into existence that they might compose a distinct order, and complete the scale of intellectual being, in a manner that would confound the several orders, and interrupt the scale. Some have condemned the creation, some the government of the world, and some both. The discoveries made, and every day making, in natural philosophy, have shown so many things which were thought useless, or hurtful, to be necessary, or beneficial, that a man who should talk like Lucretius, and others, about the physical world, would be at this time ridiculous. But he who talks as extravagantly as Cotta, and many others, about the moral world, is still sure to be heard with attention.

That creatures should censure their Creator, in the government of the world he has made and preserves, would appear surprising and shocking, if men had not been familiarised with this

* Vide. Notes to the Treat. de Orig. Mali. C. v, Sec. 5.

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language. But how should they not be familiarised with it, when the preachers of natural and revealed religion have been the loudest in holding it, though not the first indeed, for they have done nothing more than repeat what all the atheists, from Democritus and Epicurus, have said? Like them, they have insisted much on what they assume that God should have done, and has not done, to promote and secure the happiness of his human creatures; whilst they have passed over lightly what he has been pleased to do, for both these purposes. I might undertake to prove that Titus and Trajan were tyrants of the Roman empire as well as Nero, by the same method whereby they attempt to prove that the Supreme Being is the tyrant of the world he governs. They have pushed such arguments on this subject, and they have pushed them so far, that the whole tribe of these writers, like Wollaston and Clarke whom I have mentioned, do in effect renounce the God whom you and I adore, as much as the rankest of the atheistical tribe. Your priests, and our parsons, will exclaim most pathetically, and rail outrageously, at this assertion; but have a little patience, and I will prove it, to their shame, to be true.

That there is room for much contingency in the physical and moral world, under the direction of a general providence, has been said already; and that, amidst these contingencies, happiness, outward happiness at least, may fall to the lot of wicked, and outward unhappiness to that of good men. But then, this general proposition is of very uncertain application, too uncertain by far, to be made a rule by which to judge of the dispensations of Providence. There is, generally speaking, less immorality, and less morality, worthy to draw down interpositions of divine vengeance or favor, and more innocence, perhaps, in the world, than is commonly apprehended. But however this be, divines, above all men, have the least reason to insist on the objection, taken from the assumed unhappiness of good men, since they cannot do so without manifest inconsistency. That innocent children should be punished to the third and fourth generation, for the sins of their guilty fathers, nay that the whole race of mankind should be punished for the sin of one man, they hold agreeable to the justice of God; because they believe on the faith of the Scriptures, that he has proceeded, and proceeds, in this manner, with mankind. But that men, apparently innocent, should be exposed to any sort of evil, they hold repugnant to his justice; although they affirm on their knowledge, not their belief, that his providence suffers this to happen in the course of human affairs.

Divines are not only thus inconsistent, they have on another account, and, as preachers of Christianity, a worse grace than

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any men whatever to cry out so loudly against the evil that happens sometimes to good men. They assert, that the law of grace is much more perfect than the law of nature, and that revelation inspires much more sublime notions of the Deity, and of piety towards him, than reason. But how has it come to pass, then, that heathen theists defended the divine providence against theists who attacked it, and recommended a cheerful resignation to all the dispensations of it; whereas Christian divines have made a common cause with atheists to attack this providence, and to murmur against the necessary submission that they pay? Admirable precepts, and illustrious examples, of the first kind, may be quoted from paganism. I will mention the first that occurs to me. Seneca, who pleaded the cause of God against atheists, as I plead it actually against divines, heard the philosopher Demetrius break out in his sufferings into this rapturous expression: "Immortal gods, I have but one complaint to make: why was your will no sooner communicated to me? Had I known it sooner, I would have run to meet what I am now called to suffer." The passage is so very fine, that it deserves a place not in the margin, but in the text, and to be cited in the original. "Hoc unum dii immortales de vobis queri possum, quod non ante mihi voluntatem vestram notam fecistis; prior enim ad ista venissem, ad quæ nunc vocatus adsum." Few can arrive at this pious fortitude of mind, but we should all endeavor it: and the Christian, who goes murmuring and complaining through this life against the justice of God, deserves little to taste of his goodness in any other state.

Heathen, as well as Christian philosophers, who believed that all things were made for the sake of man, found it hard to reconcile the phenomena to this hypothesis: and, unless they could do so, they found themselves embarrassed with this hypothesis, in maintaining the existence of an all-wise and all-powerful Being, against the cavils of atheists. The former, however, did their utmost, both on the supposition of a general providence, and of particular providences, to answer all these cavils. They did it too, not only plausibly, but strongly, in many instances, and would suffer, in no case, the hypothesis of a future state, if they did at all admit any such, to unravel the demonstration they had made. The hypothesis might be true: they knew that the demonstration was so. The hypothesis might be true in part only, and relatively to some of the phenomena: they knew that the demonstration was true in the whole, and that the infinite wisdom and power of God were manifest alike in all the phenomena. They might have had an entire recourse to this hypothesis, if they had pleased; for it had been invented early in Egypt, and elsewhere; and have attempted to untie, by one, the knot

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they had tied by another, as Christian divines have done since. But this doctrine was never firmly enough established in the philosophical, whatever it was in the vulgar creed; and besides, they might think it insufficient for their purpose in any of the various manners wherein it was taught.

The conduct of Christian philosophers has been very different from this. Far from defending the Providence of God, they have joined in the clamor against it. They have brought him to the bar of humanity: and the self-existent Being, the first cause of all things that are, the Creator, the Preserver, the governor of the universe, in whom we live, and move, and have our beings, has been tried, convicted, and condemned, for his government of the world, on the general principles of human justice; like the governor of a province, or any other inferior magistrate. Nothing has hindered, even those who pretend to be his messengers, his ambassadors, his plenipotentiaries, from renouncing their allegiance to him, as they themselves have the front to avow, but the hypothesis of another state; wherein it is supposed that he will vindicate his justice, and make amends for whatever is irregular, and unjust in this, by punishments and rewards in that. On this hypothesis alone they insist: and therefore, if this will not serve their turn, God is disowned by them, as effectually as if he was so in terms.

Heathen legislators might have reason to add the terrors of another life to those of the judgments of God, and of the laws of man, in this. Heathen priests might have reason to support these opinions by the authority of their pretended revelations, and by the mysterious rites of religion. But what reason could theists have, at any time, to pass condemnation on the whole scheme of God's providence as it is exercised in this world, in order to confirm an opinion, by reason, that must stand on the bottom of revelation, or on none? On this bottom it would spread, and prevail as far, and as much, as the revelation itself. We see that it does so both in Christianism and in Mahometanism. On this bottom it would do some good most certainly, and it could do no hurt. The mischief lies in the way of proof. Reason establishes the belief of an all-perfect Being. Revelation supposes it. If we impute any imperfection to this Being, we shake the belief of him. The imputation implies contradiction, and reason is set in opposition to reason. But, on the other hand, some things may be admitted piously, on the faith of a revelation, concerning which we can scarce attempt to reason without impiety. Thus we may believe that men are to live again in another state, and that they will be dealt with there even with some regard to the use they have made of their free will here. But to enforce this hypothesis by any attempts to

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prove that the dispensations of Providence here are unjust, or to advance anything concerning the assumed future state, which cannot be reconciled to the divine perfections, is impious and absurd. It is impious and absurd, therefore, to rest the demonstrated existence of an all-perfect Being on an hypothesis that imputes real injustice to him hereafter, as an expedient to screen him from the imputation of imaginary injustice here: and the divines, who do this, if they are not atheists, which it is reasonable as well as charitable to believe that none of them are, must be esteemed abettors at least of atheism, by every man who examines impartially their whole proceeding.

LXVII.

Metaphysical writers counsel us sometimes very gravely to silence imagination, that we may attend to experience, and hearken to the voice of reason. The advice is good, and they would neither puzzle themselves, nor perplex knowledge, if they took it as they give it. But who can forbear smiling, when these very men abandon themselves, at the same instant, to all the seductions and to all the transports of their own imaginations? No men do so more than these, not even the persons of your own tribe: and, as many of their writings, from those of Plato down to some that are very modern, might pass more justly for poems than for philosophical treatises, so was I not in the wrong when I advised you to suppose rather that Barnevelt or Scriblerus had proved your Rape of the Lock to be philosophical, than to suppose they had proved it to be a political poem. These philosophers are so afraid of ignorance, that they expose themselves to error, which is worse. What they imagine presumptuously may be, they pass dogmatically for that which is, in matters of the first philosophy above all. You carry on your poetical systems "per ambages deorumque ministeria:" and, for this purpose, no other being can be so like to man as a poetical god, nor any intricacies of your marvellous so great as those of imaginary abstractions, imaginary analogies, and delusive sounds, which these men employ to carry on theirs. It is hard very often to discover their meaning, or even whether they have any meaning or no: and when we examine closely what is intelligible in their writings, we find it sometimes hard, and sometimes impossible, to reconcile clearly and consistently many things that they advance in maintenance of the same system, and in a supposed conformity to it.

This world is called, by some, the porch or entrance into another. We go from the porch into the house by death; for

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death does not destroy that soul, that self which is the living agent. It destroys, indeed, the gross material body, or, to speak in the familiar sublime of Socrates, the soul wears out her suit of clothes.* Nay, she was said to wear out so many, in different states, both before and after this, that there was some apprehension taken lest she should wear out herself at last. They who assert a future as well as the present life connect the two, in some of their discourses, so intimately together, that they assume the moral government of God, which begins in one, to be carried on more perfectly and to be complete in the other. Thus virtue has a sufficient sphere of action, and all the consequences of it have time to follow. Good men may all unite with one another, and with other orders of virtuous creatures, and form one blessed society in a future state; nay this happy effect of virtue, in distant scenes and periods, may have a tendency to amend those vicious creatures, throughout the universal kingdom of God, who are capable of amendment.† They who express themselves in this manner, who think that virtue is militant here, and may be and is often overborne, but that it may combat with greater advantage hereafter, and prevail completely, and enjoy its consequent rewards in some future state, though they think the present a state of probation and trial, cannot think it to be such finally. But the language of divines, in general, is different. Though they are not quite agreed about the eternity of torments in hell, yet they are agreed that our state of probation ends with this life; that however we are disposed of from the hour of death to the day of judgment, that judgment will be determined by what we have done in this state: and that the exact distribution of rewards and punishmeuts then made, will, and alone can, set the present disorders and inequalities right, and justify on the whole that scheme of Providence,‡ which appears in the small portion of it that we see so inexplicable, so confused and so unworthy of infinite wisdom, justice and goodness.

The first of these theological hypotheses, for such they are to reason, independently of revelation, one as much as the other, may be received. Far from accusing directly, and excusing indirectly the providence of God, it does not so much as imply any thing repugnant to the perfections of the divine nature. I do not presume to say, that these perfections require it should be true, nor that my understanding is able fully to comprehend it. But since I may believe it true, though I cannot believe the latter to be so without contradicting the fundamental principles of the-

* Vid. Phæd. in Plato. † Vid. Anal. of Relig. P. 1. C. 3.
‡ Vid. Clarke's Evid. Prop. 4.

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ism, I embrace with joy the pleasing expectations it raises in my mind. The ancient and modern Epicureans provoke my indignation, when they boast, as a mighty acquisition, their pretended certainty that the body and the soul die together.* If they had this certainty then, would the discovery be so very comfortable? When I consult my reason, I am ready to ask these men, as Tully asked their predecessors, where that old doating woman is who trembles at the acherontia templa, the alta orci, and all the infernal hobgoblins, furies with their snakes and whips, devils with their cloven feet and lighted torches? Was there need of so much philosophy to keep these mighty genii from living under the same terrors? I would ask further, is the middle between atheism and superstition so hard to find? Or may not these men serve as examples to prove what Plutarch affirms, "that superstition leads to atheism?" For me, who am no philosopher, nor presume to walk out of the high road of plain common sense,† but content myself to be governed by the dictates of nature, and am, therefore, in no danger of becoming atheistical, superstitious, or sceptical, I should have no difficulty which to choose, if the option was proposed to me, to exist after death, or to die whole, as it has been called. Be there two worlds, or be there twenty, the same God is the God of all, and wherever we are, we are equally in his power. Far from fearing my Creator, that all-perfect Being whom I adore, I should fear to be no longer his creature.

LXVIII.

Having said thus much to show why the first of these hypotheses, which I am willing to admit, may be true, though it has no foundation in Scripture or reason, and is purely imaginary, it remains that I show more at large why the last, which I reject on principles of reason, must be on those principles necessarily false. When divines abandon the strong holds of revelation, wherein they are, or should be, made secure, they have no right to expect submission out of their province; and they must be content, when they reason profanely or absurdly, to be sent back to revelation. It is profane even to insinuate, and much more to affirm peremptorily, that the proceedings of God towards man in the present life are unjust: and if that could be admitted, it would be absurd to admit that this may be set right; which means, if the words have any meaning, that this injustice

* Se, cum tempus mortis venisset, totos esse perituros.
† Introd. to Princ. of Hum. Knowl.

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must cease to be injustice, on the received hypothesis of his proceedings towards man in another life. One is profane, notwithstanding all the questions they beg to support the charge. The other is absurd, on the very principles on which they argue, and according to our clearest and most distinct ideas or notions of human justice.

That a due proportion of reward and punishment, that reparation and terror are objects essential to the constitution of human justice, will not be denied. That which falls short of these is partial. That which goes beyond them cruel. Men are liable to err on both sides. God on neither. Men may have, therefore, amends to make; God never can: and when we say amends have been made, we imply, that injustice has been committed. Now, as absurd as it appears to say this, when we speak of the proceedings of God towards good men in the other life, we must say it, for we have nothing else to say, if we assume that he has dealt unjustly by them in this life; since it is beyond omnipotence to cause that which has been done not to have been done. The happy state of good men in heaven, according to this bold hypothesis, is not so much the reward of the virtue they practised on earth, as an act of God's justice against himself, as it were, an act, in short, by which he makes them reparation, and an ample one it is, for the injustice he did them here. The miserable state of wicked men in hell is an exercise of justice delayed, but exercised so severely at last, that it would exceed vastly all the necessary degrees of terror, if any of these creatures remained after it in an undetermined condition wherein terror might have its effect.

Though reparation and terror are the essential objects of justice in the punishment of crimes, yet it is not sufficient that they be made so in general only. Justice requires that punishments, and we must say the same of rewards, the two sanctions of all laws, be measured out in various degrees and manners, according to the various circumstances of particular cases, and in a due proportion to them. Such is the procedure of Providence in the moral government of the world; for though particular interpositions to reward or punish particular men, if there are any, are too rare and too conjectural to pass for rules and measures of his government, and though it be apparent that the immediate regard of Providence is directed to men collectively, not individually, yet the divine wisdom has provided means to punish individuals, by directing men to form societies, and to establish laws, in the execution of which civil magistrates are in some sort the vicegerents of Providence. To them distributive justice is committed, and when this fails to have its effect, when the immorality of individuals becomes that of a whole society,

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then the judgments of God follow: and as men are regarded collectively, they are punished collectively in the order of a general providence. This is evidently the economy of God's government of mankind in this life. That which it is assumed will take place hereafter, and according to which he will proceed eternally in another life, is the very reverse of this. Every individual human creature is to be tried by the Son of God, that is, by God himself, at the great day, in the valley of Jehosaphat. The criminal, who has been justified here, will be condemned there. The innocent man, who has been condemned here, will be justified there. The most secret actions, nay, the thoughts of every heart, will be laid open, and sentence will be pronounced accordingly. What now does that justice require, if it may be called justice, when it tends neither to reparation nor terror, on the principles of which we argue? It requires most certainly that rewards and punishments should be measured out in every particular case, in proportion to the merit and demerit of each individual. But instead of this, it is assumed, conformably to the Christian revelation and to the doctrine of Plato, that the righteous are set on the right hand of the judge, and the wicked on the left, from whence they are transported to heaven, or plunged into hell. They are tried individually, they seem to be rewarded or punished collectively, without any distinction of the particular cases which have been so solemnly determined, and without any proportion observed between the various degrees of merit and demerit, of innocence and of guilt, in the application of these rewards and punishments.

I ask the men who maintain that justice is the same in God as it is in our ideas of it, and who presume on thesh ideas to censure the divine Providence, when they see such as they esteem good involved sometimes in public calamities with such as they esteem wicked, whether this be a jot more repugnant to their ideas of justice, and of the moral fitness of things, whereon they insist so much, than it is to reward the greatest and the least degree of virtue, and to punish the greatest and the least degree of vice, alike? The particular rules of justice consist in the distinction and proportion that have been mentioned; and unless they are preserved, the general rules must be of course perverted. I ask what these persons would say, if they beheld a man, who had done some trifling good to society, recompensed like one who had saved his country; or if they, who were convicted of petty larceny, should be delivered over to the hangman, at one of our sessions, with those who had been found guilty of assassination and robbery? It may be said of eternal torments in hell, that they have been made known to us by revelation, that there are, no doubt, sufficient reasons for them, which we

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are as unable to discover as we were to discover that there would be any such torments; but that these reasons not having been revealed, it is in vain to inquire about them, or about the various degrees of beatitude and of misery, wherewith good men may be rewarded, and ill men punished in another life. Now this answer is certainly conclusive on the hypothesis of a revelation, and being so, it should have hindered those divines, who maintain this eternity, from attempting it on arbitrary suppositions, and on such frivolous reasonings as are not only unworthy of infinite wisdom, but even of common sense in a very low degree, what reputation soever the authors of them have had in theology. How comes it to pass now, that the first of these divines account for an eternity of torments, and would, and might as well account for the apparently unjust equality of rewards to all the good and of punishments to all the wicked in another world, on the reasonable supposition, that the proceedings of Providence are righteous and just, though determined by reasons incomprehensible to us; and will not suffer themselves to be silenced by the same answer, when they clamor against the justice of the same Providence, because good men are sometimes unhappy, and ill men happy in the present world? With what front can the last of these divines insist on all the trifling reasons they bring to reconcile an eternity of torments to the goodness and justice of an all-perfect Being, or may bring to to show that the foolish paradox of the Stoics, and the bloody laws of Draco are agreeable to these attributes, whilst they reject the arguments, that are drawn from what God has done in the constitution of the human nature, against what they assume that he designed to do?

If acts of goodness and mercy, carried to excess, may become instances of weakness, or of something worse; if acts of severity may become, in the same manner, instances of cruelty; if the bounds of the former are limited by the proportion necessary to encourage the virtuous, and to excite the vicious, who are capable of it, to amendment; if those of the latter are limited by the proportion necessary to make reparation, and imprint terror on the minds of men; if it be arbitrary and tyrannical to make no distinction of persons in dissimilar, as it is partial to make this distinction in similar cases; if all this be agreeable to the clearest and most distinct ideas and notions we are able to frame of justice and equity; and if we are to judge of the conduct of God's providence in another world by these, as we must be, if we are to judge by these of the conduct of his providence in this world; if all this be so, I have a right to conclude that they, who impute imaginary injustice to God here, impute very real injustice to him hereafter; and that it is impossible to believe

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that such a man as Clarke, to instance no other, could be in earnest, when he affirmed that an exact distribution of rewards and punishments would be made, by this hypothesis, in a future state, and that such a scheme of providence would appear worthy of infinite goodness and justice, as well as wisdom. He forgot, when he asserted this, or he hoped his readers would forget, what he had asserted in another place, by which he deprived himself of the usual evasion, that he and all his tribe employ, whenever they assume that God says or does any thing that it is impossible to reconcile to the divine perfections. He could have no recourse to the incomprehensibility of God's judgments on this occasion. He had asserted, that the moral attributes are the same in God, as they are in our ideas. On this theological, for it is nothing less than a theistical principle, he had joined in the common cry against the irregularities, inequalities, and disorders of this world, on which the charge of injustice against the providence of God is founded. To make this good, he appeals to human understanding. He appeals then to the same understanding, to the same ideas and notions, for the truth and sufficiency of the hypothesis, by which all that is amiss here is to be set right, and the divine providence is to be justified on the whole. If the truth and sufficiency of it to this purpose cannot be so made out, the cause of God is evidently betrayed by these men. They plead most strenuously against his justice, and they seem to plead booty for it.

To assume that the conduct of Divine Providence towards mankind in this world has one criterion, and in the next world another, would be too extravagant. God is the same, his attributes are the same, he can act against them in neither; and if we are competent to judge what they require of him in one, we are competent to judge what they require of him in both. Concerning his dispensations in both, therefore, we may argue on our general or abstract notions of human justice, when we defend his providence against the accusations, and even the pretended justifications of it by such a writer as Clarke, who, like another Eunomius, presumes to know God, his moral nature at least, and to teach others to know him, as well as he knows himself. In arguing with other divines, who are less presumptuous, for some such there are, who do not pretend to reduce the whole economy of God's dispensations within the comprehension of human reason, we have another rule, sufficient to combat this hypothesis, and to secure us from error, one part of which they follow readily, and the other part of which they are obliged, like the rest of their brethren, to evade in particular instances, though none of them dare to reject it avowedly and in general. The rule, I mean, is this: first, that we adore the

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Supreme Being in all his works, and in all the known proceedings of his providence, without assuming any postulata on the strength of our own reason, which are neither confirmed, nor evidently suggested by them, and which may be set in opposition to the wisdom, goodness, or justice of this Being, by dogmatical reasoners *à priori*. Secondly, that we admit no proposition to be true, nor any argument valid, which expresses or implies, on what authority soever, the least conceivable imperfection in God. As to the first, the divines we speak of here practise it very laudably when they refuse to raise the importance of man, and the benevolence of God towards him so high, as to affirm, like the others, that he is the final cause of the world, and that the happiness God was desirous to communicate to him, was the final cause of his creation; when they take away these principal foundations of the accusations brought against providence, and show the accusations themselves to be made up of exaggeration, and false representation. As to the second, neither their case, nor their conduct is the same. In the character of philosophers they are under no necessity of maintaining this hypothesis, nor obliged to excuse that providence they never accused. But in the character of divines they are under this necessity, and their profession obliges them to defend every part of the system it was instituted to defend. They defend it, therefore, and they find the task of doing so in concert with their brethren much harder, than that of defending the cause of God against their brethren and the atheists in alliance, by showing that there is more good than evil in this world, and that the happiness of mankind is provided for sufficiently in it.

LXIX.

If the immortality of the soul could be proved by physical arguments, the eternity of rewards and punishments would be no necessary corollary deducible from it. But this immortality is a consequence necessarily deducible from this eternity. This immortality, therefore, seems to rest on a moral proof, and an inverted order of reasoning, since if the justice of God requires that there should be a state of eternal rewards and punishments, the soul of man is immortal, certainly, and the same persons, who were virtuous or vicious here, must receive their retribution there. To conceive this personal identity, which is ascertained by our consciousness, and which is known as intuitively as our existence in the present, and must be so in the future state, unless we drink of the water of Lethe by the way, is not difficult surely; and it may be matter of surprise to observe how

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many scruples have been raised concerning it by men who seem to embrace the rest of this doctrine without any. The rest of this doctrine is, however, as inconceivable as this part of it is plain; and whether we suppose that it was derived from an opinion of the immortality of the soul, or that this opinion was derived from it, neither way will it stand the test of reason; for in one case it is founded originally on mere imagination, or on physical and metaphysical proofs that are insufficient; and in the other, the opinion of the soul's immortality is founded originally on moral proofs that are precarious, to say no worse of them yet.

It is said that this opinion was brought into Greece first by Pherecydes of Syros. But the doctrine of future rewards and punishments had been brought thither long before. It is indeed far more probable that this opinion and this doctrine were imported together by Orpheus, and other ancient poets, though the master of Pythagoras might be the first who wrote in prose on these or any philosophical subject. But, however this was, it is obvious enough that they, who believed the immortality of the soul, and future rewards and punishments in another life, did not believe an eternity of torments to be the common fate of the wicked. The priests had reasons of private as well as of public interest to increase these terrors; and yet in days of the blindest superstition they tried to reconcile them, by several softenings, to the justice of God, and to the belief of men. The whole mythology of the other world was so absurd, and so confused in itself, and it is come down to us in so many dark and inconsistent reports, that the learned attempt in vain to make out any coherent system of it. Thus much however we know, that whilst the pagans installed in the choir of the gods some men, whose sepulchres were to be seen on earth, for the good or great actions they had done in their generations, "viros claros et fortes,"* and bestowed on these a sort of sedentary immortality, they held that there was a middle state, wherein they who were neither good enough for heaven, nor bad enough for hell, the "animæ sanabiles" of Plato, should be purged, and their state of probation, as it were, lengthened. This purgatory your church has borrowed: but the heathen divines applied the belief of it to a very theistical purpose, to justify the providence of God in his dealings with men; and your church has made use of this belief to a very mercenary purpose, to bubble the laity, and to enrich the priesthood. We know further that the system of a metempsychosis, according to which the persons, who existed in the human state, had pre-existed, and would

* Tully.

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exist again, after they went out of this, in others; and that the several ranks and orders of beings in heaven, as well as the several degrees and kinds of punishment in hell, were invented to answer the objections that were made to the government of God in this world, and that might be made to the economy of the same government in the next; if it was assumed that all those, who did not deserve to be damned at their going out of this life for what they had done in it, were saved alike, and that all those, who did not deserve to be saved, were damned at the same time in a lump. These hypotheses, and others of the same sort, were very extravagant no doubt; but still they were well intended. They afforded answers at least as good as the objections made to the dispensations of Providence in this life, and they rendered those of the same Providence in another life less repugnant to the notions of justice.

How great this repugnancy is, and how much reason there is to apprehend that it should destroy little by little, among men who reason for themselves, and are not stupidly implicit, all those impressions which the belief of a future state is so usefully designed to give; rather than to hope that the received hypothesis should fortify these impressions, or even preserve them on the minds of such men; two observations will help to show: one of which cannot be contradicted, and the other of which is so easily proved, that like self-evident propositions which admit of no proof, it scarce requires any. That which cannot be contradicted is this. As much as Christian divines are hampered by some expressions in holy writ, there are those among them who appear very evidently to have disbelieved the eternity of the torments of hell; for it is too little to say that they doubted about them, or seemed to oppose them: and these are men who bow to none in superiority of parts and learning. Such too there were in the church of old. That which scarce requires any proof is this. They who maintain this eternity are reduced to employ such arbitrary assumptions, such inconsistency in what they advance, and such futility of argument, as they would reproach severely to others, and be ashamed to employ themselves on any subject that was not theological. The writings of these men are in every hand, and I dare appeal to you whether you can force your inward sense to admit that eternal torments in another life are consistent with any notions of justice you are able to frame, either because every sin is an offence against an infinite Being, and therefore deserves infinite punishment, as if every offence was to be punished, not according to the degree of it, but in proportion to the dignity of the lawgiver; or because these torments may be a warning to the heathen, whose state of probation may be extended beyond this life, and must be extended, to

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make this argument good, beyond the consummation of all things; or finally, for it would be tedious and useless to mention any more, because the damned may grow mad, and not feel their misery, or grow fond of it, in which case if it was not cruel, it would be absurd, to continue their punishments?

Compare the greatest human virtue you can imagine, exposed to all the calamities of life during a term of fifty or threescore years, and recompensed with happiness which exceeds vastly in every instance of it, as much as in its duration the sum total of all these calamities, that is, with happiness infinite and eternal. Compare the greatest human wickedness you can imagine, accompanied with an uninterrupted unmingled affluence of every thing which can go to the constitution of human felicity during the same number of years, and after that punished in a state of excessive and never-ending torments. What proportion in the name of God, will you find between the virtue and the recompense, between the wickedness and the punishment? One of these persons has amends made to him beyond all conceivable degrees of a just reparation. The other has punishments inflicted on him beyond all conceivable degrees of a necessary terror. Again. Suppose two men of equal virtue, but of very opposite fortunes in this life: the one extremely happy, the other as unhappy during the whole course of it. Are these men recompensed alike in the next? If they are, there arises such a disproportion of happiness in favor of one of these virtuous men, as must appear inconsistent with justice, and can be imputed to nothing but partiality, which theism will never impute to the Supreme Being, whatever artificial theology may do and does in many instances. Are these two men not recompensed alike? Has one of them a greater and the other a less share of happiness in that heaven, to which they both go? If this be said and allowed, the same disproportion, nay, a disproportion, infinitely greater will remain. The difference must be made by the degree, it cannot be made by the duration of this happiness, which both of them are to enjoy eternally. Now any degree of happiness the more, though never so small, enjoyed eternally, will exceed infinitely not only all the happiness of earth, but all that of heaven which can be enjoyed in any determined number of years. If you suppose two persons of equal guilt, one of whom has been as happy as a wicked man can be, and the other of whom has suffered as much misery in this life as a wicked man can be thought to deserve, the same reasoning will hold good: the disproportion of punishments in one case will be like the disproportion of rewards in the other, and that justice, which is said to be the same in God as in our ideas, will be acquitted in neither. A divine pressed by such arguments, might have recourse, for

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aught I know, to something like that balance, wherein it was said that Wollaston affected to weigh happiness and misery even to grains and scruples, in order to assume that the additional degrees of happiness in heaven, and of misery in hell, cease as soon as the account between the two worlds is made even, and the disproportion taken away; after which the two good men and the two wicked men remain in the different states allotted to them, on an equal foot. This might be said by one accustomed to make hypotheses at random and without any other rule than his want of them, but I cannot think it would deserve a serious answer.

LXX.

Something else may be said, that will appear more reasonable at first, and that will be found, on examination, only to set the injustice of the assumed future dispensations of Providence in a still stronger light. It may be said, that although such proportions, as I have mentioned, are included in our notions of justice, strictly taken; yet rewards and punishments do often exceed these strict bounds, without being deemed repugnant to justice, and marks of weakness, or of cruelty, in him who bestows them, or inflicts them. This now is true in certain degrees, and in certain circumstances, according to which these degrees are to be regulated. Excessive mercy may be vicious, as well as excessive severity, in the judgments of men; and they must be excessive when the particular proportions in which they are measured out, exceed by far what is necessary to encourage the good, and to terrify the wicked, the two general objects of justice. The bounds of human justice are straiter, or larger, but still it has bounds; and whenever the former are transgressed, the circumstance which justifies this transgression must be some public good. Such is the nature of human justice, according to which we are to judge of divine justice in our disputes with these men who say that they are the same.

For my part, who do not think that they are the same in such a sense, as to make us adequate judges of one as well as of the other, I could easily persuade myself, if I admitted this hypothesis, that the mercy and goodness of God stand as it were on one side of his justice, that his mercy pardons the offenders who amend consistently with his justice; for else, as all men offend, all men would be punished; and that his goodness may carry on the work his mercy has begun, and place such as are the objects of both in a state where they will be exempt perhaps eternally from all natural, and, as much as finite creatures can be, from

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moral evil. I could persuade myself, that they who are objects of neither, and are not therefore pardoned, remain, if they do remain, secluded from the happiness of the others, and reduced to a forlorn state. Some such hypothesis, where no certainty is to be had, I could admit as probable, because it contradicts none of the divine attributes, sets none of them at variance, nor breaks their harmony: for though I fear to pronounce what God will do, and am always astonished at the boldness of those who pronounce not only what he will do, but what he ought to do; yet I think myself obliged, among the various opinions that are, or may be entertained of the divine proceedings, to embrace as probable, if I embrace any, that and that alone which comes nearest to the best notions I can frame of moral perfection. It is not possible for me, therefore, to conceive any attributes standing on the other side of God's justice. No attribute can hold that place, unless cruelty be a divine attribute; which it would be blasphemous to suppose, though the Jews, and some other barbarous people, have supposed it to be so.

To reform offenders is neither the sole, nor the principal end of punishments. Those of an inferior kind may have this intention. Those that are capital must have some other, and it would be too ridiculous to make the hangman, who executes a criminal, pass for the reformer of his manners. The criminal is executed for the sake of others, and that he, who did much hurt in his life, may not only be deprived of the power of doing any more, but may do some good too by the terror of his death. If a prince, or a magistrate, tortured and put to death clandestinely, without regard to reparation or terror, even such as deserved capital punishment, he would be deemed a tyrant; because the principal end of punishment is not obtained by this proceeding; and such a prince, or magistrate, could have no motive to punish, but the pleasure of punishing, which no spirit but that of anger, vengeance, and cruelty can inspire. A spirit of justice punishes; but the judge who has no other spirit, punishes with regret. If these notions are true, and surely they are true, how can any one, who believes that God is an all-perfect Being, believe at the same time that he does what would deserve the highest censure among his imperfect creatures? None but those who accuse him of injustice in this life, can believe him so unjust in the next. They make him more unjust, than the prince or magistrate would be in the case that has been supposed. If the torments of hell take place before the consummation of all things, he is as unjust as this prince, or magistrate. But if sentence is not pronounced, nor judgment executed, till then, he is infinitely more so. Clandestine punishments may have some of the effects of justice, and may contribute in some degree to the reformation

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of men, or at least to the good of society, by putting out of it such as are hurtful to it. But what effect of this kind can further punishments have, when the system of human government is at an end, and the state of probation over; when there is no further room for reformation of the wicked, nor reparation to the injured by those who injured them; in fine, when the eternal lots of all mankind are cast, and terror is of no further use?

You will say perhaps, for it is commonly said, that although it be too late, after the consummation of all things, or of the system of this world at least, to obtain the ends of human justice, yet the divine justice remains to be satisfied; and that this cannot be satisfied unless every human creature, who has sinned beyond all measure of pardon here, be punished eternally hereafter. Can this now be urged by any one, who has assumed that divine and human justice are the same, and that God appeals to man for the equity of his proceedings; or, indeed, by any one else? Sure I am, it cannot be so, consistently, by the former, nor reasonably by the latter; for though it may be said, to soften this bold assumption, that justice is truly the same in God as it is in our ideas, but that, God being infinitely superior to man, an extreme difference must needs arise, in the exercise and particular applications of it, between divine and human justice; yet this will appear to be an evasion in the present case and not an answer. A prince, or a magistrate, may do no doubt very justly, nay it is essential to justice that he should do, what would be unjust and criminal in a private. The rank he holds, and the power with which he is invested, give him this right: but neither superior rank, nor superior power, can give him a right to pervert justice, nor to act in opposition to those laws of the society which ought to be the rules of his conduct. Thus the Supreme Being, whose majesty, wisdom, and power are elevated far above all our conceptions, may do justly, in a multitude of instances, what princes, and magistrates, have no more the right, than the power of doing. But then we may presume to say, that there is this similitude between the two cases. Though the right and power of the Supreme Being are not delegated, they may be limited like theirs. This I mean. They are limited, if we believe certain divines, by eternal fitnesses and unfitnesses of things independent on him, according to which he regulates his conduct, and all rational beings are obliged to regulate theirs, because all rational beings are capable of knowing them. But if we reject this doctrine, as, I think, we ought to do, and not without horror, we must be convinced, however, that the Author of all nature, in constituting our system, constituted certain specific physical and moral natures, according to which he governs the world: from whence it will follow, that the reasons, on

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which his providence acts in the present system of things, may be known to us in some instances, and must be unknown to us in others; whilst the whole economy of any future system must be absolutely impenetrable. We are able to account, in great measure, for the general distribution of good and evil here, though not perhaps for every particular instance. But we are wholly unable to say what will happen hereafter. This only we know, that neither here, nor hereafter, God will deal with his creatures in direct violation of those natures and essences of things which he himself has constituted, and has given them the means of knowing. He will not deal with them according to one rule here, and according to another hereafter.

As we must believe, if we think worthily of the Supreme Being, that he will not proceed with his human creatures, in any state, in violation of that justice which he has constituted in the nature of things, and whereof he has made them able to acquire ideas and notions; so we must be on our guard lest we should be induced to believe that he will proceed, at any time, agreeably to those affections and passions which have so great a share in directing our conduct, and so much influence over our thoughts. Sovereign reason is exempt from affection and passion; and the great cause of error in theism is this, we judge of it with all our affections and passions about us. What the effects of this cause were in the heathen world we all know. But few of us consider that the same cause has worked ever since, works still, and if it does not produce a crop of errors as foul and as abominable as those, it produces a crop not less abundant.

LXXI.

Whatever the vulgar religion of the heathen taught their philosophers, even those of them who assumed Providence to be the most active in directing the affairs of this world, were unanimous in their opinion, that the Supreme Being was never angry, nor ever did harm.* The first part needs no commentary, the second very little. They believed that God punished in this life, but they believed that his punishments were inflicted for the general advantage of mankind; that the evil which happened to the virtuous was designed by his goodness to try their virtue, to preserve and to improve it by exercise; that the evil which came on the wicked was directed by his justice to chastise their

* Num iratum timemus Jovem? At hoc quidem commune est omnium philosophorum ..... nunquam nec irasci Deum, nec nocere.—Tull. de Off. L. 3.

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crimes, to terrify, and reform; and that a Being, who acted always on motives of goodness and justice, could be never said with truth and propriety to do harm. Such was the language of heathen divines, and thus they represented the proceedings of God to man. But our artificial theology holds another, which is very different. Let us mention some of those doctrines which are of this kind, and begin and terminate in that which is here opposed particularly. According to them, God loves, and he hates, he is partial, angry, and revengeful. He creates some rational beings with a determination to save them, and others only to damn them. It is not sure that repentance and amendment can appease the wrath of God, nor any thing less than a sacrifice. He has given a law, the law of nature and of reason, to all his human creatures; the sanctions of it are a natural tendency of virtue to the happiness, and of vice to the misery, of mankind: but these sanctions are so imperfect, that they cannot procure obedience to the law, even with the supplemental help of occasional interpositions on the part of God, and of a constant discipline of civil laws on the part of man. To supply this imperfection, therefore, there must be necessarily some further sanctions of this law, and these are the rewards and punishments reserved to a future state.

Here is ample room for reflection. I shall make but three. The term "imperfection" is, in this case, employed equivocally; for we may conceive an absolute and a relative perfection, and that which appears imperfect in one of these considerations, may be perfect in the other, according to the design of the lawgiver. We may presume to say, that if it had been in the order of God's designs to make the state of mankind as happy as the universal and steady observation of this law would make it, he would have made the sanctions of the law as perfect as the law. But we see by what he has done, which is the only sure way of knowing what he designed, that we were made to live in a state of moderate and mixed happiness. His law shows us the perfection of our nature, in which that of our happiness consists. Reason draws us to it, affections and passions from it; and our free will, inclining sometimes to one, and sometimes to the other, maintains that state which mankind is apppointed to hold in the order of rational beings. Had the sanctions of the law of nature been stronger, we should have risen above this state. Had they been weaker, we should have sunk below it. Thus they are relatively perfect, relatively to the design of the lawgiver; and neither the goodness, nor the justice of God, requires that we should be made better, or happier, than we are.

But, further, if we will suppose any other sanctions necessary to enforce the original and universal law of God, the law of our

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nature, they cannot be those of a future state. Future rewards and punishments are sanctions of the evangelical, as temporal were of the Mosaical law. Sanctions must be contained in the law; they must be a part of it. In their promulgation they must precede, as the law does, necessarily all acts of obedience, or disobedience to it; though in their execution they are retrospective to these acts, and are the consequences of them. So likewise new sanctions may be added to an old law by the same authority that made it. But justice requires that the new be as public as the old, and that the authority of them be as well ascertained to every one who is bound by the law. These conditions are essential, there can be no sanction without them; and therefore the rewards and punishments of a future state, which have not these conditions, are no sanctions of the natural law. Reason and experience, that taught men this law, showed them the sanctions of it. But neither of them pointed out these. Have we any grounds to believe, that they were known to the antediluvian world? Do they stand at the head or tail of the seven precepts given to the sons of Noah? Were they so much as mentioned by Moses, who had need of every sanction, that his knowledge, or his imagination, could suggest, to govern the unruly people to whom he gave a law in the name of God? Were they believed, was that of future punishments, at least, believed by any of the philosophers of Greece? Phythagoras told strange stories, indeed, of the infernal regions, where he had been in his several transmigrations from body to body; and Plato had his informations from Erus the Pamphylian, who came back like a messenger sent on purpose to give an account of this new-discovered world. But were they in earnest? It would be ridilous to think that they were. Both of them affected to be lawgivers, and it is no wonder that in this character they employed a hypothesis, which other lawgivers had employed with success in those eastern nations with which they were acquainted.

From such religions, from such philosophy, and from such political institutions, the Jews, who picked up many scraps of all these among the Egyptians and their neighbors in the East, introduced the doctrine of future rewards and punishments into their own, soon after the captivity of Babylon at least. But whenever they introduced it, this doctrine was not of their own growth most certainly. It was not derived from their original, revelation: and accordingly it was not received by that sect who adhered strictly to the law. Thus we see that this assumed double sanction, far from being coeval with the law of nature, or any positive law of God, was unknown long to the nations who lived under the former, and even to his chosen people who lived under the latter; and that when it was known, and

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wherever it was known, it was plainly of human, not of divine authority.

My third reflection is this. As the double sanction of rewards and punishments in a future state was in fact invented by men, it appears to have been so by the evident marks of humanity that characterise it. The notions whereon it is founded are taken rather from the defects, than the excellences of the human nature, and savor more of the human passions, than of justice or prudence; for Seneca said very consistently, though Plato, whom he quotes, very inconsistently, "nemo prudens punit quia peccatum est, sed ne peccetur." How worthily soever some philosophers might think of the Supreme Being in this, and in other respects, who did not believe that God spared the wicked in this world in opposition to his justice, that they might have an apparent reason to give for his punishment of them in another world in opposition to his mercy and justice both; the vulgar heathen believed their Jupiter, as well as their inferior divinities, liable to so many human passions, that they might be easily induced to believe him liable, in his government of mankind, to those of love and hatred, of anger and vengeance.—They might attribute these to him in his public, as well as the others in his private capacity; for, according to them, he acted in both: and it is hard to say which of these passions could be attributed to him with greater irreverence. The Jews indeed, as often as they made God descend from heaven, and as much as they made him reside on earth, were far from clothing him with corporiety, and imputing corporeal vices to him. But the very first, and almost every other point of their theology, history and tradition showed him in two other capacities, one not so shocking as what the heathens imputed to Jupiter in one capacity, but little less irreverent; for the Creator of all things, the one Supreme Being, was at the same time, according to all these, the tutelary local deity of a family, and a nation, with whom he entered into covenants that bound him and them mutually. I need to descend into no further particulars. They are enough known, and extremely suitable to the first principle of this system, which contains such instances of partiality in love and hatred, of furious anger, and unrelenting vengeance in a long series of arbitrary judgments, and bloody executions, as no people on earth, but this, would have ascribed, I do not say to God, but to the worst of those monsters who are suffered, or sent by God, for a short time, to punish the iniquity of men. Is it any matter of wonder now, that the greatest part of a people trained up in such notions of the Supreme Being, and of his arbitrary government here, should be disposed to receive a heathenish doctrine, which taught nothing more arbitrary, though a

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little more cruel, of his proceedings hereafter? Is it any matter of wonder that they, who believed God inflicted punishments to the third and fourth generation on innocent persons, should believe that he punished offenders themselves eternally; if even they did not soften this severity by a metempsychosis, or some other way which I do not well remember, nor think it worth my while to examine?

This doctrine was in vogue in the church of Moses, when that of Jesus began. The Sadducees declined, the Pharisees flourished, and the great systematiser of Christianity was himself a Pharisee. He, who insists so signally on an arbitrary exercise of the power of God, might have established very consistently this doctrine of eternal rewards and punishments, by his gospel, if it had been established by no other. But it was part of the original revelation; and how absurd soever it might be in the Jews to take it from the Gentiles, who had taught it without either reason or revelation to authorise them, it might seem reasonable to the Christians to adopt it. When the Jews assumed it on the faith of idolatrous and superstitious people, they added a new sanction to an old law. When the Christians adopted it they received the new law, and the new sanction together, on the faith of the same revelation. Thus one objection to the doctrine was prevented, and every man, who entered into the new covenant, knew this condition of it beforehand. But the other objections remained still in force; and on the whole it was found so impossible to reconcile this sanction of eternal punishments to the divine attributes, and these future invisible judgments of God to the actual proceedings of his providence, that in the early days of Christianity it was rejected by some not inferior to any in knowledge or in zeal.

LXXII.

The hypothesis of a rotation of souls, out of which even the soul of Christ was not, I think, excepted, at least by Origen, seemed preferable to this. The makers of systems saw that the general tendency of virtue to promote the happiness, and of vice to promote the unhappiness of mankind, by which God made it the common interest of his human creatures to cultivate one, and to restrain the other, were the sole means that his infinite wisdom had ordained to this end in the ordinary course of his providence; and that, if the wicked were sometimes punished, either collectively or individually, by extraordinary interpositions real or apparent of the same Providence, this happened rarely, after long forbearance; and not till the measure of iniquity was full.

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They saw that the mercy of God was in this manner of proceeding as conspicuous as his justice, and that both were directed to maintain such a moral state as the imperfection of human nature admitted. No wonder then if they found it hard to believe that the same God, who dealt thus with his creatures here, dealt so differently with them hereafter; and that he, who punished to a gracious end, the maintenance of a moral system, with measure and proportion here, punished to no end at all, when this system was at an end, with inconceivable and eternal torments. They might think, according to the vulgar theological notion, that the wrath of God against sinners for what they had done in this system was not appeased when they went out of it. But they might think too, and it is plain they did think, that wrath itself could not exceed all proportion so far, as to appoint a state of eternal torments to succeed a very short state of probation. They mingled, therefore, some notions of justice with this of wrath, and imagined several states of probation; that souls, for instance, were sent to inform some bodies in recompense, or punishment of what they had done in others; that the wicked suffered for their impurity, but that in new states of probation they would have new occasions of purification.

By some such hypotheses they endeavored to soften a doctrine that shocked their reason, and could not be reconciled to any moral attribute, no, nor to the physical attributes of God, not to his wisdom at least. But the general tide of artificial theology ran the other way; and time, and dogmatical affirmation established absurdity in this case, as they have done in many. Fathers and councils decreed, and Christians believed, that the Supreme Being dooms almost all his rational creatures, all whom these men do not think fit to save, to eternal torments for what they have done in this life. He created them in effect, to be eternally miserable, according to this doctrine, since the term of this life can be reckoned for nothing in an infinite duration, and yet is to decide their state to all eternity. The doctrine we speak of assumes such a proceeding necessary to satisfy divine justice; whereas in truth it can be ascribed to no principle, but that of anger, and to the revenge of a being who punishes to the full extent of his power, and merely for the pleasure of punishing, and without any regard to justice, creatures who did not offend him merely for the pleasure of offending him, creatures who had free will, and made wrong elections, creatures who might plead, for that plea the worst of them might make, if not in excuse for their crimes, yet in mitigation of their punishment, their frailties, their passions, the imperfections of their nature, and the numerous temptations to which they stood exposed.

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LXXIII.

It is justly matter of scandal, and it would be matter of surprise, to hear men, who acknowledge an all-perfect Being, and who speak with so much reverence of him on some occasions, speak of him with so little on this, and others, if we did not observe in general that foolish presumption with which they are apt to erect themselves into the standard and measure of every thing; and in particular that profane license which the Christian theology has derived from the Jewish, and which divines have rendered so familiar and so habitual, that men blaspheme without knowing they blaspheme, and that their very devotion is impious. The license I mean, is that of reasoning and of speaking, even in common conversation, of the divine, as of the human nature, operations, and proceedings; sometimes with, and sometimes without the salvo of those distinguishing epithets and forms of speech which can in very few instances distinguish enough. The Jewish Scriptures ascribe to God not only corporeal appearance, but corporeal action, and all the instruments of it; eyes to see, ears to hear, mouth and tongue to articulate, hands to handle, and feet to walk. Divines tell us, indeed, that we are not to understand all this according to the literal signification. The meaning is, they say, that God has a power to execute all those acts, to the effecting of which these parts in us are instrumental.* The literal signification is indeed abominable, and the flimsy analogical veil thrown over it, is stolen from the wardrobe of Epicurus; for he taught that the gods had not literally bodies, but something like to bodies, "*quasi corpus:*" not blood, but something like blood, "*quasi sanguinem.*"† This analogy if it could be allowed, would justify in good measure your Homer as a philosopher, for as a poet he wanted no excuse; and something of this kind has been attempted. But who is there, philosopher, or poet, except Jewish and Christian rabbins, that can employ in good earnest images taken from corporeal substance, from corporeal action, and from the instruments of it, to give us notions in any degree proper of God's manner of being, and of that divine inconceivable energy in which the action of God consists, and by which the natural and moral worlds were produced, and are preserved and governed? The

* Vide Serm. of the Archbishop of Dublin, on Rom. viii, 29, 30.

† . . . "Quidni igitur similiter," says Gassendi, "fateatur esse in Deo non passiones, sed quasi passiones? atque adeo non irasci illum, sed quasi irasci; nec teneri gratia, sed quasi teneri?"

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more human they are, the less adequate they must be; and whilst they do no good one way, they do much hurt another. They cannot exalt, they must debase our conceptions, and accustom the mind insensibly to confound divine with human ideas and notions, God with man. This happened in the case of the anthropomorphites, who imagined that God had a human body, because it was said by Moses that he created man in his own image. So dangerous are these expressions, whose literal sense is obvious to all, whilst the analogical is understood by few, and attended to by fewer. So false is the reason given in excuse for them, that we must know God this way or not at all. Far from making us know him better, they lead us into error. They make us unknow him, if I may say so, and impose an imaginary being upon us for the true God. Other passages of the Scriptures confirmed the error of the anthropomorphites; and if it was heretical in the Christian church, it could not be deemed, one would think, very heretical by the Jews; since they held communion with them so far, as I remember, that they eat the Paschal lamb together.

Thus again, and to bring the observation quite home to the present purpose; the same Scriptures, that are so apt in many places to make those who read them represent the Supreme Being to themselves like an old man looking out of a cloud, as painters have represented him often, ascribe to him at the same time, by the whole tenor of them, all the affections and passions which characterised the nation of the Jews, whilst they were a nation, very strongly, and which are not entirely worn out by their dispersion, and their commerce with others. God loves, according to their theology; but he loves with a strange predilection and partiality for them, who are not certainly the most lovely of his human creatures. He loves like Deiotarus, a king of Galatia, who for the sake of one son put the rest of his children to death. He is merciful too, but his mercy is arbitrary, and depends on mere will. "He will have mercy on whon he will have mercy," and when he will have mercy, "and whom he will he hardens." Even they who esteem themselves his chosen people, who, we say, have been hardened, and they say have been chastised, have waited for it these two thousand years, and wait still. Towards mankind in general, his anger is often furious, his hatred inveterate, his vengeance unrelenting. But when the wicked repent of their sins, he repents sometimes of his severity. What a description now is this of an all-perfect Being? What a task have men, several of whom are great masters of reason, undertaken, when they have undertaken to reconcile such doctrines to his perfections, and to other doctrines directly contrary to these, that are interspersed in the same

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books? The task is hard, indeed, but their profession made it necessary; and all the force of great learning and of great parts has been prostituted to conceal the ignorance, and to palliate the errors of the most illiterate, superstitious, and absurd race of men who ever pretended to a system of things divine or human.

LXXIV.

Analogy is employed in this case as it is in the other, and indeed in every case where theological paradoxes, which are not a few, are to be defended. If analogy itself, such as some divines assume and represent it, could be defended, there would be no case, wherein it ought to be employed with all its force more than in this; for, surely, to impute human passions, even the worst of them, to the Supreme Being, is not further off from blasphemy, than it is to ascribe to him a corporeal form, and the sensations, and the limbs, and the actions of a man. It is not true, though it has been asserted, that this analogy is obvious to every one, and that no one can think on reflection that any of these passions can affect literally the divine nature.* It is on the contrary as true, that a multitude of good Christians, far the greatest number, believe at this hour that the divine nature is affected by them, as it is true that a multitude of good heathens represented to themselves their gods and goddesses, even the father of gods and men, under a human form, or conceived at least, which is much the same, that these divinities took the human nature upon them whenever either business or pleasure called them to converse and act with the children of men. Let us not imagine that any thing is too absurd for men to believe even on reflection. Heathens, Jews, Christians, have believed the absurdities I have mentioned; and great metaphysicians aan divines have believed this analogy.† It would be tedious

* Vide Serm. supra citat.

† The lord president of Scotland, who is no divine by profession, but something better, and more useful to society, deals however too much in divinity; and the contagion of Hutchinson's writings and conversation makes him really mad *quoad hoc*, for there is such a madness, notwithstanding all his sagacity, good sense, and knowledge. In that strange book, which he has written in this delirium against Tindal, and which I have quoted somewhere, he says very rationally, "that we ought to be amazed at the impudence of those who pretend to decide what God is or is not, and what he can or can not do, from the notions they have framed to themselves of his attributes, his nature and perfection." But he himself affirms, in the same book, a multitude of facts relating to the Deity, and to the whole economy of divine Providence, on the faith of Jewish and Christian reveries, and his own or his

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to take notice of all that has been said, stupidly enough by some, and not without a little air of plausible ingenuity by others, to establish this notion. I shall say no more about it, than my subject requires necessarily, and even that will be sufficient, I think, to explode a doctrine, that may be turned strongly against revealed religion, and that cuts up the very root of natural.

All the knowledge that God has given us the means to acquire, and therefore all that he designed we should have of his physical and moral nature and attributes, if they may be considered separately, as we are apt to consider them, and if the latter and every thing we ascribe to these, are not to be resolved rather into the former, into his infinite intelligence, wisdom, and power; all this knowledge, I say, is derived from his works, and from the tenor of that providence, by which he governs them. We see him in a reflected, not in a direct light. But, because we cannot frame full and adequate ideas of this sort, nor answer every question impertinent curiosity may ask; will it follow that we have, properly speaking, no knowledge at all of his attributes, nor of the manner in which they are exercised? Every part of the immense universe, and the order and harmony of the whole, as far as we are able to carry our observations and discoveries, are not only conformable to our ideas or notions of wisdom and power, but these ideas or notions were impressed originally and principally by them on every attentive mind; and men were led to conclude with the utmost certainty, that a being of infinite wisdom and power made, preserved, and governed the system. As far as we can discern, we discern these in all his works; and where we cannot discern them, it is manifestly due to our imperfection, not to his. God cannot be in any instance unwise nor impotent. This now is real knowledge, or there is no such thing as knowledge. We acquire it immediately in the objects themselves, in God, and in nature, the work of God. We know what wisdom and power are: we know, both intuitively and by the

master's whimsies; just as the others do on the faith of theirs. The censure, therefore, which he passes on them, may be justly passed on himself, unless it can be shown, which it never can be, that what he advances is better proved to be true in fact, than what they advance is demonstrated conformable to right reason. Type, emblem, and analogy are the common means to disguise the absurdity both of the facts and reasonings they maintain; the consequence of which is abominable: for the vulgar may very well understand literally, what is pretended to be said analogically only, of the Supreme Being, of his nature, and of his proceedings, in the Bible; since this writer asserts it to be extremely plain, that the language of the Scriptures, which describes the Deity's actions, affections, and inclinations in terms borrowed from the usage, the sentiments, and resolutions of men, is not so figurative as it is generally supposed to be, and that we ought to understand it something more literally, than reasoners are willing to allow.

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help of our senses, that such as we conceive them to be such they appear in the work; and therefore we know demonstratively that such they are in the worker.

What then could a very respectable writer* mean, when he said, speaking of divine knowledge and wisdom, that God must either have these, or other faculties and powers equivalent to them, and adequate to the mighty effects which proceed from them? It is plain he meant by this supposition, in a case where nothing is ascribed but what ought to be ascribed to God, to prepare the way for the same supposition in a case where he was to excuse the Jewish theology, and his own, for attributing in terms to God those affections and passions, which cannot be so attributed without impiety. The archbishop would have had no need to run into these absurdities, nor any temptation to advance some strange paradoxes, that he advanced on the foundation of an assumed analogical knowledge, if he had confined himself to refute one impiety, that of the predestinarians, without attempting to excuse another. Our ideas of divine intelligence and wisdom may be neither fantastic nor false, and yet God's manner of knowing may be so different from ours, that foreknowledge, as we call it improperly in him, may be consistent with the contingency of events, although that which we call properly foreknowledge in ourselves be not so. But he reasons about the essential natural attributes of God as if he reasoned about those that we call moral, in which way of reasoning there is great and manifest error. The former are fixed, uniform, and specific natures, that want no equivalent; and that are certainly adequate, since the mighty effects that are produced proceed from them. They may be perceived more or less in different cases, but in no case will they vary, even in appearance and in human apprehension, from what they are. Like the sun, they may appear sometimes in the full effulgence of their brightness, and sometimes behind those clouds which the eye of human reason cannot pierce. But still, like the light and heat of the sun, though differently perceived, they will appear the same. The latter are not such fixed, uniform, specific natures to human apprehension. They are rather assumed nominal natures, not manifested by God in his government of the world as clearly and as determinately, as the physical attributes of wisdom and power are in the whole system of his works; but framed into abstract general notions by the human mind to help itself in the moral consideration of human actions, and applied to the Supreme Being that we may reason more distinctly, if not more truly, about his nature, and the dispensation of his providence. We

* Archbishop King, ubi sup.

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ought to attribute all conceivable perfections, without doubt, to the supreme all-perfect Being. We can never raise our conceptions of this kind too high. They will remain, after all our efforts, vastly inadequate. Nay if we suppose them less so, or push absurdity to the utmost and suppose them adequate, yet still they will remain very insufficient criterions by which to judge in many cases, as men presume to do in all, of these perfections in the exercise of them. The reason is plain. God acts according to a multitude of relations unknown to us. He acts relatively to his system, we judge relatively to ours.

Into such opposite paradoxes are divines transported by presumptuous reasoning and whimsical refinements, whilst they pretend to teach us the knowledge of God and of heavenly things, that some of them affirm dogmatically, and without any regard to truth, which they sacrifice readily to maintain a hypothesis, that the moral attributes are in God just what they are in our inadequate, fluctuating ideas, and that God himself appeals to man for his proceeding conformably to them: and some again are so far from falling into this, that they fall into a contrary extreme, and would persuade us that the attributes of God are all alike inconceivable to us as they are in themselves, and can be known no way except by analogy; which is not to know them at all: for knowledge, which rests in analogy, stops short, and is not knowledge. The first of these opinions has done infinite hurt to all religion, and has turned it into superstition every where, and in every age. The last has not been of much service to Christianity, as I apprehend; and sure I am that it will leave the objection, made to the Jewish Scriptures on account of the images under which they represent the Supreme Being, just where they find it.

Here let us draw one line of separation, among others, between natural and artificial theology. By that we are taught to acknowledge and adore the infinite wisdom and power of God, which he has manifested to us, in some degree or other, in every part, even the most minute, of his creation. By that too we are taught to ascribe goodness and justice to him wherever he intended that we should so ascribe them, that is, wherever either his works, or the dispensations of his providence do as necessarily communicate these notions to our minds, as those of wisdom and power are communicated to us in the whole extent of both.—Wherever they are not so communicated, we may assume very reasonably that it is on motives strictly conformable to all the divine attributes, and therefore to goodness and justice, though unknown to us, from whom so many circumstances, with a relation to which the divine providence acts, must be often concealed; or we may resolve all such cases into the wisdom of God,

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and, resigning ourselves to that, not presume to account for them morally. Thus we follow God, and pretend to have knowledge of his moral character, no further than he gives it; no further than these abstract or general notions, which we collect from the proceedings of his providence, are confirmed by the same.

LXXV.

But we are taught a very different lesson in the schools of artificial theology. In them all the notions of those obligations, under which men lie to one another by the constitution of their nature, are transferred to God; and an imaginary connection between his physical and moral attributes is framed by very precarious reasonings *à priori;* all of which are founded on that impertinent supposition, that moral fitnesses and unfitnesses are known, by the eternal reason of things, to all rational beings as well as to God. They go further. As God is perfect, and man very imperfect, they talk of his infinite goodness and justice as of his infinite wisdom and power, though the latter may preserve their nature without any conceivable bounds, and the former must cease to be what they are, unless we conceive them bounded. Their nature implies necessarily a limitation in the exercise of them. Thus then the moral attributes, according to this theology, require infinitely more of God to man, than men are able, or would be obliged, if they were able, to exercise to one another; greater profusion in bestowing benefits and rewards, greater rigor in punishing offences. This whole system of God's moral obligations, or of divine ethics, being raised *à priori*, and not *à posteriori*, is a system of the duty of God to man: let the blasphemy of this expression be charged to the account of those who make it proper and necessary to be used, in order to expose their doctrine. It is a system of what he ought, or is obliged by his attributes to do; and not a scheme of what he has done. It prescribes to God, and the dispensations of his providence are acquitted or censured as they are conformable or not conformable to it.

The makers of this system have gone still further, and have attributed to the Divinity not only the perfections, but the imperfections of humanity. Superstition improved by philosophy succeeded that which was rude and unsystematised; and learning and knowledge finished what ignorance had begun. When they saw that the constitution of things, and the order of Providence did not answer the notions of goodness and justice in all the extent, in which they thought it was fit to ascribe these

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notions to a Supreme Being, contrary notions stood ready to take the place of these; and, since they could not ascribe them all to one, they ascribed them to several divinities. From hence a good and an evil god, the ditheism of philosophers. From hence that universal polytheism, a principal use of which was to account for the phenomena of nature, and for the government of the moral world. The moral characters of pagan divinities differed, like the moral characters of men; and, to make these characters complete, the same passions were ascribed to both: one nation, nay one man was favored by one god, another by another; and as there were parties on earth, there were parties in heaven. But here we must distinguish between the theology of the Jews and that of other nations. The Jews, with more inconsistency and not less profanation, dressed up the one Supreme Being in all the rags of humanity; which composed a kind of motley character, such as foolish superstition, and mad enthusiasm alone could ascribe to him, and such as no man, who believes him to be an all-perfect Being, can hear without horror.

The most barbarous nations had the most barbarous deities generally, and the gods seem to have been civilised no faster than their adorers were, and even not so fast, nor in the same proportion: for we know by experience, that superstition can maintain barbarity in religious policy, among those who are the furthest from it in civil. The ancient Chinese, it is said, represented the Supreme Being, the Lord of heaven and earth, for so they called him, as the giver of all good,* as an object of adoration and of gratitude, to whom their emperors offered up the first fruits of the corn they had sowed with their own hands. But the ancient nations, of whom the histories and traditions with which we are better acquainted speak, represented the divine nature like that of their own tyrants. The divine favor was to be obtained by importunate supplications, by magnificent presents, and by all the external show of service, and pomp of adulation. Their gods too, like their tyrants, were prone to anger, and hard to be appeased. Nothing less than bloody sacrifices of beasts, of men, of children, could appease them; and the notion of rendering them propitious by putting other creatures to death being established, we are not to wonder, if the greatest offenders grew the most devout. In this respect they had better quarter from gods than men, though Seneca says, that it cost more to assuage the wrath of their gods, than the rage of their tyrants, "ut sic dii placentur quemadmodum ne homines quidem sæviunt."

If we would own the truth, we should be obliged to own that

* Scien. Sin.

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this kind of propitiation is much more repugnant to all our notions of justice, than any of those instances of supposed injustice which divines and atheists charge on God; and yet it continued to be the constant practice of the Jews at the same time as they boast that God was their king, and relate the terrible judgments that he executed, and that they executed by his command, or with his approbation, personally on one another, and personally for their own sakes on other people. Thus they blended together at once, in the moral character of God, injustice, cruelty, and partiality. They made him an object of terror, more than of awe and reverence, and their religion was a system of the rankest superstition; for nothing can be more true, than what St. Austin quotes somewhere from Varro, that they who are religious revere, and the superstitious fear God.* The saint would have done well to have applied this true maxim to certain abominable doctrines of his own, and to have learned from an heathen to correct his own theology. But the truth is, that Christianity preserved in many respects a strong tang of the spirit of Judaism, as Judaism had taken, and incorporated in the first institution of it, many of the rites and observances at least of Egypt; for I will not say that the legislator, who was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, took the belief of one God from the doctrine of the Theban dynasty, as different in that respect from the polytheism of the other Egyptians, as that of the Jews was: though I might suspect that he did so much more reasonably, than a very able writer insinuates that the Jews might instruct other nations in the most excellent philosophy, and that natural religion was originally built on the religion revealed to them.† The ceremonies of the law of Moses in the worship of God were retrenched, and a more inward devotion, a more reasonable service were established: though even this devotion and this service retained an air of that enthusiasm which prevailed among the prophets, or preachers of the Jewish church, on whom the spirit of God was supposed to descend. The Supreme Being took a milder appearance several ways among Christians. His favor was confined no longer to one people; all mankind were construed by this new theology to be of the seed of Abraham, and they were all included in the new covenant. The Messiah came, and God did for fallen man what he would not do for fallen angels, according to a remark of Archbishop Tillotson. He sent his only son, who is one and the same God with himself, into the world to suffer an ignominious death, and by that sacrifice to redeem all the sons of Adam from the con-

* Varro ait, Deum a religioso vereri, a superstitioso timeri.
† Vide Def. of Revealed Rel. by Conyb. p. 406.

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sequences of his wrath, which the sin of Adam had entailed on the whole race of mankind. Christian theology discovers in this mysterious proceeding, the love of God to man, his infinite justice and goodness. But reason will discover the fantastical, confused, and inconsistent notions of Jewish theology latent in it, and applied to another system of religion. This love will appear partiality, as great as that which the Jews assumed that he had shown in preferring their nation to all the nations of the earth. This justice will appear injustice in all the circumstances of the fall, and in the redemption of man by the propitiatory sacrifice of an innocent person. This goodness will appear cruelty when it is considered that the propitiation was made by tormenting, and spilling the blood of the victim; and in short injustice and cruelty will appear inconsistently united in this circumstance, that mankind could not have been redeemed if the Jews had received, instead of crucifying the Messiah; and yet that they were rejected then, and have been punished ever since, for not receiving, and for crucifying him.

On the whole, the moral character imputed to the Supreme Being by Christian theology differs little from that imputed to him by the Jewish. The difference is rather apparent than real, and if the effects of sudden and violent anger are imputed to him in one system, those of slow and silent revenge are imputed to him in the other. The God of the Old Testament rewards and punishes visibly, and signally here: he terrifies often by his anger, he reforms sometimes. The God of the New makes little difference here between those whom he approves, and those whom he disapproves; so little, that he is charged with injustice for it: because he lies in wait to punish the latter hereafter with unrelenting vengeance and eternal torments, when it is too late to terrify, because it is too late to reform. Divines would be therefore under a double obligation to reconcile these passions to the idea of an all perfect Being, if that was possible. But because it is impossible, they take the part of denying, against the express terms of their Scriptures, that he has any such passions. They quote contradictory passages, which were designed,* they say, to make us understand that these representations are imperfect, and to keep us from imagining that the things spoken of are in the same manner in God, in which any of these passages express them: as if inconsistency could preserve from error, or be an excuse for it. They say very truly, that it would be absurd to understand the representations literally: but they argue very precariously, when they conclude from thence that they were not intended to be so understood. Is

* Archb. King, ubi sup.

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it less repugnant to human reason to ascribe the human passions to the divine nature, than it is to impute to God many other things which our theology imputes to him? I recall them not in particular. This only I will say, and you must own, that it cannot be hard to conceive, how the Jews and the first Christians came to entertain such absurd notions, by any man, who considers that in the most enlightened ages, and at this hour, the greatest part of the Christian church believes that the same propitiatory sacrifice, which Christ offered upon the cross, is daily offered up for the living and the dead on ten thousand altars at once, and that they eat and drink the very same body and blood. Well might the Jews and the first Christians believe in contradiction to their reason, when an infinite number of learned men, and great philosophers believe in contradiction to their reason and their senses both.

We have observed above how this nostrum of analogy is applied to purge off the literal meaning of those passages which ascribe to God the form of man. Like a mountebank's panacea, it will have no better success when it is applied to purify those that ascribe the human passions to him. Archbishop King,* for I think it worth my while to quote no other writer in favor of analogy, answers the objection made to this doctrine, "that if it be true all religion may be lost in mere figures," by saying "that there is great difference between this analogy and what we call figure. That the use of the last is to represent things, otherwise well known, so as to magnify, or lessen the ideas we have of them, to move our passions, and to engage our fancies; by which means they are often employed to deceive us. But that the use of divine analogy is to give us notions of things where we can have no direct knowledge." Now it seems to me that analogy is figure, or it is nothing; and that, if it is figure, it is of the kind of those which are employed to deceive us. The use of figure is not only to illustrate, and adorn things known, but to help our conceptions, and to introduce things knowable into the mind. When it is not employed to any of these purposes, to the first by orators and poets, or to the last by philosophers, figurative style is silly, unmeaning talk, or it is imposition, and fraud. We may be deceived by it, no doubt; but we cannot be deceived long, if the use of it be confined to things that are knowable by us. He who is not able to tell us without any figure, what he means by the figure he employs, will neither deserve, nor have the attention of men of sense; and, besides, in matters that are knowable by us, we may discover the propriety, or impropriety of it by our own researches.

* Ubi sup.

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The case of analogy is very different. It is a similitude, or resemblance of an object with some diversity, as the school-men say very intelligibly. But then the asserters of it say, that this object is not to be known otherwise by us, and that we must be content to know it this way, or not at all. If this assumed divine analogy differs from other figures, therefore, it differs in this, they cannot deceive long, this may deceive always. No, says theology: it never can deceive, because these analogical notions of the divine nature are communicated to us by God, himself in his word. But who does not see, that this falls into the absurdity mentioned above? A theist doubts of the authenticity of this word, because such notions are contained in it. A divine justifies the notions, because they are contained in it. To want external proof sufficient to constitute this authenticity, and to have internal proof turned against it, would be too much. The weaker the former is, the more necessary it becomes to defend the latter. But then it is defended by so many arbitrary assumptions, and forced interpretations, that a Bible, without a comment, can be reconciled neither to itself, nor to what we know of physical and moral nature; and that, with a comment, it is in a multitude of instances the word of man, rather than the word of God. There are not only things mysteriously, but things untruly expressed in it. In one case, God has so little regard to the weakness of our capacities, that his language is far above all human conception: in the other, it descends to that of the most illiterate ages, and of the most ignorant people among whom these Scriptures were written, compiled, or published. In the former, we are told that he designs to exercise our faith, which is the angular stone of every instituted religion: in the latter, that he was pleased to speak according to vulgar error, that he might be the better understood; as if the supreme intelligence, the God of truth could, stand in need of an expedient to which no philosopher would think himself reduced.

LXXVI.

It is strange to observe that such a writer, as archbishop King, should recommend his favorite analogy as the proper and necessary, the usual and general method of teaching and instructing mankind, and of leading them to knowledge, after he has assumed over and over, that all our knowledge of the divive nature and perfections rests on these notions solely, and can be carried no farther. When we are instructed by analogy, by comparison, by figure in one word, on other occasions, it is in order to arrive at the knowledge of matters knowable. Knowledge that was

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to rest in these, would not be deemed knowledge, nor even that which we might think we acquired by reasoning from them; for demonstration cannot arise from real and much less from assumed similitude nor figure. It must be established on intuitive, or sensitive knowledge. The reason is obvious. Similitudes may be assumed, and figures employed falsely. We must go beyond them, and reason independently of them, to know whether they lead us to truth, or not; for the anger of God may be as improper an image, as that of his hands and feet, and there may be, as doubtless there is, in one representation no more proportion, nor resemblance, than in the other. Analogy consists of some similitude and some diversity. As fast as we perceive this similitude and this diversity, it may help us to prove; but of itself, and without this comparison, which cannot be made when the object is unknown, it can neither prove, nor help us to prove. The right reverend author I have quoted so often is fond of an example or two, one of which turns against him, and the other makes nothing for him.

To the man, who is a stranger to any country, we produce a map of it. The map is only paper and ink. It is not the country, it has very little likeness to the country; yet this analogy gives him notions, and as much knowledge of the country as serves his present purpose. Now in the first place, though it be true that the map gives him the notion of a new country, it is equally true that the map gives him no new notion. He knew what mountains, and valleys, and lakes, and rivers are, before he saw the map; and all he learns by it is, that there are such in this unknown country: so that the comparison shows, much against the intention of the writer, if it shows any thing, that the human passions with which we were acquainted long before the analogical map was spread before us, are the same in God that they are in us. The strokes and lines of the map, do not show us Highgate, nor the Thames; the mountains may be higher, the rivers deeper, but they are mountains and rivers still, and the nature and the face of the country are much the same. In the next place, the map was made by persons who had been on the spot, or by the communication of exact memorials from them, and they to whom it is of the utmost consequence to know this knowable country may resort to it, and verify or correct the map, instead of trusting to men who know the country no better than they do, or who may have an interest to deceive them.

Another example is taken from our sensitive knowledge of outward objects. The sun, for instance, gives us by his effects the ideas of light and heat, but what they are in themselves, or what the physical nature of the sun is, we know not. Just so, the direction of God's providence in the government of the world

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gives us the ideas of anger and revenge; but what these are in themselves, or what the moral nature of God is, we know not. This comparison may seem plausible perhaps to some persons. But it will not hold. Whatever light and heat are in themselves, the simple ideas that we distinguish by these names are raised by the action of the sun immediately, and uniformly. But the complex ideas of anger and revenge are not so raised by any act, or direction of Providence. Disagreeable sensations, or pain, may be immediate effects of such acts or directions; but the moral causes of these are of our own invention. They are not uniformly assigned neither, as they are not immediately, nor determinately known; for the same appearances which are ascribed to God's anger or revenge by one man, and at one time, will be ascribed to his justice, or even to his mercy, by another man at the same time, or by the same man at another time. In all these cases, the physical causes are alike unknown in themselves, and in the manner of their operations. They are determined only by their effects. Now to argue, that, because we admit these, which are so determined, we ought to admit moral causes, which are not so determined, is something too sophistical. To conclude this head by bringing an example against analogy much more to the purpose, than those that are brought in favor of it: the man who was born blind imagined, most analogically, a similitude between the sound of a trumpet, and the scarlet color. He substituted the idea he had for that he had not, and reasoned from thence just as well about scarlet, as some men reason from their ideas of anger and revenge about the moral causes that are latent in the divine mind.

It is said that we can have no direct knowledge of the nature of God: which is true in this sense, that all the knowledge we can have of this kind is derived originally from his works, and the proceedings of his providence. All the ways of acquiring a more direct knowledge by archetypal ideas which we discern in an intimate union of the human with the divine mind, by the irradiations of mystic theology, or by the inward light of quakerism, and several more, which the phrensy of metaphysics, not very distant from that of enthusiasm, has invented, are too ridiculous to deserve the regard of common sense. But though we have not, in any of these ways, a direct knowledge of the nature of God, yet we are not reduced to know nothing of him except by analogy. If the first principles of our knowledge concerning him be reflected, as we have just now said, yet it is real. It is carried into demonstration, and is therefore direct likewise, if we may be allowed to call any knowledge by demonstration direct. What we can see of him within the extent of our horizon, we see clearly. He judged this sufficient for us, he gave us to see no

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farther by that lamp of reason which he has lighted up in our minds; and with this, little as it is, we ought to be content. But the divines, spoken of here, light up their dim taper of analogy, pretend to show us the shadows of objects, they cannot discover, and bid us be content with this. They go farther. They assert that this is sufficient for us, and though true religion be the most reasonable service, they make it the most unreasonable servitude: for thus they argue.* "Men honor and obey a prince whom they never saw, and whom they could not distinguish from another man, if they met him. Let us suppose God to be such a prince literally, as he is represented analogically. Let us suppose him to love those that obey his orders, and to be in rage and fury against the disobedient. Can we doubt that he who believes this will be saved by virtue of that belief?" Thus you see that they make at last even their own analogy unnecessary. We may conceive him, by their leave, under all the gross and repugnant images that have been employed to represent him in the Jewish Scriptures. We may conceive him to be a mighty king, that sits in heaven, and has the earth for his footstool, from whence all things that can happen are in his view. Or we may conceive him, like an eastern monarch, carried about in his palanquin, neither seeing his subjects nor seen by them, familiar with a few of his favorites, terrible to all the rest of his people, and known only by the pomp with which he is served, and by the severity of his government.† The man who thinks that every circumstance in the Mosaical history of the creation and of the fall is to be understood literally, should think, indeed, that every representation which the Scriptures make of God is to be understood in the same manner; since there can be no reason given against interpreting some of these circumstances literally, and some figuratively, that will hold against interpreting some of these passages one way, and some another. To be consistent, he should disclaim the analogy he contends for; and then nothing more will be wanting to answer all the ends of artificial theology, than to assume on such premises, that they who minister in holy things are the omrahs, the viziers, and the bassas of this mighty king, whose commands they publish, interpret, and execute, or cause to be executed; rather than his ambassadors: by assuming which latter character they may seem to lessen over modestly the dignity of their own order, and to raise that of the laity too high.—But I am ashamed to have said so much on this subject.

* King, ubi sup.
† Vide King in his Serm. on Gen. ii, 16, 17.

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LXXVII.

I might have concluded sooner, that an analogy arbitrarily assumed is not sufficient to excuse the literal attribution of those human passions to the divine nature, which are the disgrace of ours; that there is little or no difference in reality between one and the other of these attributions, whatever there may be in appearance, to an inattentive or prejudiced mind; and that anger and revenge were ascribed by the Jews to the Supreme Being as literally as compassion and mercy, as literally as injustice in this life is ascribed to his Providence by atheists and divines, or the justice of it in another is asserted by the latter. The false conceptions, and the licentious reasonings about the divine nature and providence, that have been mentioned, as well as many more, proceed chiefly from the doctrine which teaches that the moral attributes are the same in God as they are in our ideas, that the eternal reason of things, by which he acts, is open to all rational beings; and consequently that we are competent judges of his moral proceedings towards us, since we are competent to determine what his moral character requires. But these false conceptions and licentious reasonings may proceed likewise from the analogical doctrine, as contrary as it appears to the other; for by ascribing to God not human notions and passions, but something, whatever it be, equivalent to these, King might, though he does not, reason as dogmatically as Clarke, *à priori*, from what the creator and governor of the world ought to do in those qualities, to what he has done which is condemned, and to what they assume he will do which is justified, and rendered his sole justification. On such conceptions, and such reasonings, the doctrine of future rewards and punishments has been established, as it is still taught. Had it been taught in terms more general, and less descriptive, had the punishments been represented, for instance, like the rewards, to be simply such as eye never saw, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man could conceive; it might have been maintained in credit, and have had an universal and real influence perhaps, to the great advantage of religion, even since the days of superstition and ignorance were over. But besides the absurdity of supposing that God inflicts eternal punishments on his creatures, which would render their non-existence infinitely preferable to their existence on the whole, as every one who has not the rage of paradoxes about him must admit; I apprehend that an air of ridicule has been cast on this doctrine by preserving all the idle tales, and burlesque images which were propagated in those days, and have been

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preserved in these by the united labors of nurses, pedagogues, painters, poets, and grave divines. I need not enumerate instances. They are enough known, and they have done so much to take off the solemnity, and to weaken the authority of this doctrine, that the man, who was induced to disbelieve a God by serious and pathetic discourses against his goodness and justice in the government of this world, would be hardly reclaimed to theism by an hypothesis which resembles so nearly that Mythologia de Inferis he had laughed at so often.

Since our divines have thought fit to risk the belief of an all-perfect Being, the creator and governor of all beings, on this hypothesis, they should have made it at least as plausible to the reason of mankind, as their objections are made in some degree to his reason, though much more to his affections and passions; and on which they have appealed, in concert with the atheists, to this reason, and even to experience. They should not have shown themselves so much more concerned for this hypothesis, than for the fundamental demonstrated principle of all religion, as to make, if they could, the hypothesis pass in some sort for the demonstration, and the demonstration for the hypothesis. They do little less when they attempt to prove that there is no God, if there is no future state; instead of insisting that since there is a God there may be a future state. The Stoics asserted,* that if there was a God, there was divination; and if there was divination, there was a God. "Reciprocantur ista: si divinatio sit dii sunt; si dii sint, divinatio est." Tully might have added in their name, "si divinatio non sit, nec dii sunt." But the heathen philosopher was on this occasion a better theist, than such a Christian divine as Clarke.

Another observation equally true, but not quite so obvious, requires to have its place here, and to be a little more developed. Natural religion is that original revelation which God has made of himself, and of his will, to all mankind, in the constitution of things, and in the order of his providence. Whatever is thus revealed is within the reach of our faculties; and the same reason which he has given us to improve the physical, he has given us to improve the moral system of our lives. Neither of them is improved equally; of which many apparent causes, and some that would be thought perhaps too refined and too hypothetical may be assigned. But they who apply their reason the most to these improvements, provide the best for their own well-being both here and hereafter on the supposition of a future state. It would not be hard to show one less instructed than you are, that human reason is able to discover, in this original

* Tully De Divin.

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revelation, every conceivable duty that we owe to God as our Creator, and to man as our fellow-creature. It would be easy to show that this system of duty is fully proportioned by infinite wisdom to the human state, and to the end of it, human happiness. Natural religion is therefore relatively perfect; and if it was so unrelatively, it would be very imperfect. It is therefore immutable as long as God and man continue to be what they are, as long as we stand in the same relations to him, and to one another. God cannot change; and to suppose that the relations of mankind to him, or to one another, may, or have changed, is to assume arbitrarily, and without any proof, that can be urged in a disputation of this kind. If it does not follow necessarily from hence, sure I am it follows probably, that God has made no other revelation of himself, and of his will to mankind. I do not assert that he has made no such particular revelations, as I did not presume to assert that there are never any particular interpositions of his providence: but this I will assert, that if he has made any such, the original and universal revelation must be the foundation, and the criterion of them all. Let it be for argument's sake, that God, who knew from all eternity what the state of mankind and of every society of man would be at every point of time, determined to deal out his revelations by parcels, as legislators are forced to make new laws, and new rules of government that are adapted to circumstances unforeseen by them; instead of making a system of moral law, when he created moral agents, that might answer his whole purpose in all circumstances of time, place, and persons; just as he made a physical system of laws for the other part, the inanimate part of his creation. Let this be assumed, for argument's sake, though it be not in any degree so agreeable to the notions of infinite knowledge and wisdom as the contrary opinion: it must be assumed at the same time, that there is nothing in any of these posterior revelations inconsistent with the first, even in appearance, and to our apprehensions; or it must be assumed that God himself, the Supreme wisdom, is inconsistent, or gives occasion to his rational creatures to think that he is so.

I reason very unwillingly, and not without a certain awe on my mind, when I presume to speak of what God may, or may not do, as familiar as this practice is to many. But if it be free from presumption in any case, it is so when we endeavor to expose that of such men as these, and may be said rather to refute their doctrines, than to advance dogmatically any of our own. I speak in this manner when I say, agreeably to the most clear and distinct ideas I can frame, that as God, the supreme truth and reason, can neither pronounce nor imply any thing that is false, or absurd, in condescension to our capacities;

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so he will, in condescension to these capacities, make no revelation to us by his word, which shall be even in appearance, and to human apprehension, inconsistent with what he has revealed of himself, and of his will by his works. This revelation, and all that is contained clearly in it, is an object of knowledge. Other revelations which we assume to be made by his word, and which we receive on the word of man, are objects of belief. Now it would be repugnant to the divine wisdom that he should perplex our knowledge in one case, or weaken our belief in the other, by suggesting inconsistent ideas of his nature, or his will. You will have learned, perhaps to say that things, which appear in a posterior revelation inconsistent with the first, would not appear such, if we could comprehend them clearly and fully. But you will unlearn this lesson, if you consider that the common distinction of things contrary to reason, and things above it, cannot be employed, on this occasion, to any purpose that will avail. If things contained in any assumed revelation are inconsistent with the religion of nature, they are most certainly contrary to reason, since the religion of nature is collected by reason from the known constitution and relations of things, and from the known order of Providence. They are therefore to be rejected. If the things contained in any such revelation be above reason, that is, incomprehensible, I do not say in their manner of being, for that alone would not make them liable to this objection, but in themselves, and according to the terms wherein they are communicated; there is no criterion left by which to judge whether they are agreeable, or repugnant to the religion of nature and of reason. They are not, therefore, to be received: and he who insists that they should be received independently of this criterion, falls into the absurdity already mentioned. He supposes them reconcileable to the original revelation God has made in his works, because they are contained in his word; whereas it is incumbent on him to show that these very things are so many internal proofs of the authenticity of this revelation, by showing that they are all reconcileable to the other. Divines themselves agree to this, or they mean nothing, when they take so much pains to reconcile them to it, in order to conclude, according to their usual method, that a thing is, whenever they imagine they have proved that it may be, or have said enough to make others believe so.

It has been made a question, whether God can, consistently with his goodness, his justice, or even with his wisdom, give such secondary revelations as are assumed on particular occasions, or without any occasion and sufficient reason for them; and whether he can, consistently with the same attributes, after leaving his human creatures for a great number of ages under the

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law of their nature, by which nothing but morality was prescribed, and nothing but immorality forbid, impose new and positive precepts, the precepts of mere will? The question has been agitated with equal presumption on both sides, perhaps; and certainly with much sophism, and more evasion than argument on one side. I enter not into it. I stand on the ground I have already made, and insist, that the law of our nature is perfect, relatively to our system, and must be immutable as long as this system continues. I insist, therefore, that it cannot be altered: but I may admit, for the point is not clear enough to oblige me to it necessarily, that things entirely and exactly consistent with it may be superadded to it by the same divine authority, though not in a manner equally authentic; and that positive precepts may be given about things which are indifferent by the law of our nature, partaking neither of morality nor immorality, and which become obligatory as soon as they are enjoined by such positive precepts. Notwithstanding these concessions it will remain true, that every instituted religion is dependent on natural religion, and should be made subservient to it.

They all boast that they are so, but experience shows that the very contrary is true. They consist chiefly of articles of faith that go far beyond all the knowledge we can acquire; and of external rites, ceremonies, and positive duties, that have no relation to those of the moral kind, which are all included in the precepts of natural religion. Now it is true in fact, that to believe these articles of faith, and to practise these external duties, are reputed in all these religions the most essential parts of them: so that a good man and a devout man may be always different, and are often opposite characters; so opposite, that I suspect no two characters would be found, if they could be nicely examined, in a great number of persons to go together so seldom. This might be exemplified in many instances, but in none more strongly than in that of the Jews. No nation so exact in observing fasts and feasts, and so superstitiously zealous in the practice of every ceremony of a law that abounded with ceremonies. But no nation so unhospitable at the same time, no people so uncharitable, nor so absolutely strangers to that fundamental principle of natural religion, universal benevolence.

LXXVIII.

It were much to be wished that the same reproach could not be made in any degree to the professors of Christianity. But I apprehend that they too must pass condemnation on this head. The doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments was

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established, no doubt, in the Christian, as in every other system of instituted religion, to enforce natural, that is, the first, the most authentic, and as we may say the mistress of all religions, since they should be all subservient to her. But this doctrine is applied, in every communion of Christians, as much to enforce matters of metaphysical speculation, or positive duties, or forms of worship, which are neither parts of natural religion, nor have any necessary connection with our moral obligations, as it is applied to enforce these. The mistress is set on a level with the servant, and the same regard is paid to one as to the other. But why do I say the same, when it is manifest that much more regard is paid in many instances, and in the application we speak of here particularly, to the latter than to the former? Metaphysical speculations, positive duties, and forms of worship can have no merit any further than they contribute to maintain, and improve in our minds an awful sense of the majesty of the Supreme Being, of our dependence on him, of our duties to him, and of the moral obligations under which we lie to our fellow-creatures: and as far as they contribute to these purposes, whether they are of human or of divine institution, they have great merit, and are of great importance. Their merit and their importance, however, cannot be equal to those of the religion they are designed to maintain and improve: and yet we find them treated by the doctors and professors of Christianity as if they had more of both, as if this part of instituted religion could be substituted in the place of that part of it which republishes natural religion, and could supply the want of it.

The clergy, who have taken the distribution of future rewards and punishments into their own hands, distribute them according to this rule. The man who has been a bad son, a bad husband, a bad father, a bad citizen, who has passed his whole life in the practice of private and public immorality, languishes on a sick bed. Conscious of guilt, he apprehends punishment, and all the terrors of hell stare him in the face. He repents, therefore, may signify in this case nothing more than this, he is afraid; and so will the most hardened villain be at the foot of the gallows. It is too late to amend, too late to repair the injuries he has done. The priest, however, who gave the terror, is called to administer the comfort. The man confesses his sins, makes an orthodox profession of his faith, joins in the prayers that are said over him, takes leave of the world with all the decorum which the discipline of his church requires, and dies. We are bound to believe well of this man's salvation, and we commit his body to the ground, "in a sure and certain hope of his resurrection to eternal life." The man who has passed his whole life in the practice of every moral virtue, and has lived up to the

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duties of natural religion in every relation, and in every station, has fulfilled by consequence all the obligations of revealed religion, as far as the latter is designed to republish, and enforce the former. But the latter is designed more immediately, and preferably for another purpose: and therefore the hope of heaven is held out to one man, notwithstanding his wicked life; the fear of hell is held out to another, notwithstanding his good life, on several occasions. Faith unimposed, and forms and ceremonies unprescribed by natural religion, may atone for the violations of it; but the strict observance of it cannot atone, in any communion, for the want of faith even in matters that have been much disputed among Christians, and that are so still in other communions; nor for the neglect of forms and ceremonies that are of mere human institution, andt hat have varied frequently, as all such institutions must and do vary by their own nature, and by the nature of those who make, and of those for whom they are made. To bring an instance or two, that occur to me first out of many. Read the creed of Athanasius, and then consider that the man we suppose in this place, who has conformed his whole life to the precepts of natural religion, and of reason, cannot be saved,* but must perish without doubt everlastingly, unless he believes faithfully such a rhapsody of jargon as talapoins and bonzes would be hardly brought to avow, as wants a sufficient foundation in the gospel, as none but factious priests, who mean to divide not to unite, could have combined to propagate, and as none but the least reasonable, and the most implicit set of men could have received for truth. Consider again, that the trite ceremony of baptism, instituted, by the heathens, practised by the Jews, and adopted by the Christians, is made so essential a part of religion under the vague name of a sacrament, that neither the moral goodness of men, nor the innocence of children can secure their salvation, unless they have passed through this mystical washing: without which, and the graces consequent to it, the good works of the former are not pleasant to God, but have the nature of sin; and the innocence of the other is infected by that original taint which spread from the transgression of Adam, and corrupted human nature in all his posterity.

These are principles of artificial theology, and such is the ecclesiastical distribution of future rewards and punishments in all Christian communions. I waive descending into particular examples taken from the east or the west, from your church or from mine. This difference only I would observe between the two last. You acknowledge still a spiritual monarch, the vicar

* XXXIX articles.

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of Jesus Christ on earth, and an infallible judge in all matters of religion, to whom you ascribe a supreme ecclesiastical authority. At least the royalists prevail amongst you, and the partisans of spiritual liberty are few. We have thrown off this ridiculous but heavy yoke, and thus it is more easy, and therefore more frequent to impose new doctrines, new rites, new ceremonies in your church, than in mine: to save, to beatify, to sanctify whom his holiness pleases, and to pronounce as many arbitrary sentences of damnation as he thinks fit. Thus we have seen the constitution unigenitus, that child of jesuitical revenge; procured by fraud and maintained by tyranny, erected into a rule of faith in France, where a few years before, to show the exercise of this power in a light as ridiculous as scandalous, not only propositions extracted from the works of Jansenius were condemned, but even they who did not understand the language in which the bishop of Ipres wrote, like the nuns of Portroyal, were required to believe, and affirm that these very propositions were contained in his writings.

Such occasional abuses of the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, which the pope and his inferior pontiffs have applied with little regard to natural religion, and even with more regard to their artificial theology than to revealed religion, have been frequent. But there is another, which has been constant in all the ages of the church, and by which the clergy has raised exorbitant contributions on the laity. When Christianity appeared first in the world, the professors of it composed a little, and in general a poor flock. They who had some substance helped to maintain those who had none; alms were gathered for the saints, and every church had a common purse. Like our quakers, they provided for their own poor; and, like our quakers too, the teachers and the taught made one body, one undivided society. The former as well as the latter lived on what they had of their own, or on the common purse, or on the bread they acquired by their industry: and, as ludicrous as it may seem, it may be said seriously, because it may be said truly, that if this order of things had been preserved among Christians, we might behold at this day, with great edification, some of my lords the bishops working at their leisure hours (and they have many such from episcopal functions at least) in their trades, like St. Paul. But this order of things was changed early, and the distinction of clergy and laity established; after which the former enjoyed in their own right, or as trustees for the poor, all that had belonged to every church in common before. When the former came by several means to be considered as a separate society under the name of the church, they appropriated the wealth, which increased daily, as well as the name, to themselves; and

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when every church had a bishop, the superior robbed the inferior pastors, and appropriated to himself what belonged to them, to his church, and to the poor; all of whom he threw on the laity to be maintained by them.

LXXIX.

That I may not render the deduction too long for this place, I content myself to observe further, that, as this order of men increased in outward dignity and riches, to neither of which they had any other claim than that which their own usurpations, and the bigot generosity of superstitious ages gave them, they increased in ambition and avarice. The doctrine of a future state was prostituted to serve the purposes of both; and as soon as they had persuaded the laity, that the power of tying and untying, which was given by Christ to his disciples, invested the clergy with a power of determining in this world the condition of men in another, heaven and hell became inexhaustible sources of ecclesiastical dominion and wealth, and were applied to little else. The man, for instance, who left his estate to the church, and to pious uses, as they are called, completed all the immoralities of his life by defrauding his family at his death. But the priest, or monk, conveyed him to heaven directly, and passports for that purpose, even of modern date, are said to have been found in the hands of the dead. The layman, who had a dispute with the church, stood exposed to the thunderbolt of excommunication, which he was prepared to believe did not only separate him from her communion here, but would deprive him of happiness hereafter; so that he might be damned eternally for withholding a tithe-pig.

It was left to the industry of the clergy to improve these advantages in their several stations all over the Christian world; and it must be owned that they improved them to the utmost of their delegated power: for being delegated, as extensive as it was, it was circumscribed. But that from which it was delegated, and which resided in the seat of this empire, the papal power, in short, knew no bounds. Casuists have taught that the pope may by the fulness of it determine rightfully against right;* as if he made things good and just by willing them; which is, I think, the prerogative of God, but which no man, except a casuist, will affirm to be that of his pretended vicar. The proposition will sound harshly to your ears, how catholic soever they may be.—But if you consider the practice of your church, and the preten-

* Ex plenitudine potestatis jure potest etiam contra jus decernere.

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sions of your sovereign pontiff, you will be forced to confess that they can be founded on nothing less than the supposition of such an exorbitant power as I have mentioned. There is no duty of natural, nor of revealed religion, nor of ecclesiastical institution commonly much more respected than either from the observation of which you may not be free by dispensations, in the breach of which you may not be indulged, or for the breach of which you may not be still more easily pardoned, at a market price; and this market price was formerly settled and published in a book of rates, that every good Christian might know how much his favorite vice would cost him. A passage in the gospel should have been altered on this occasion, and men should have been taught that it is more easy for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a poor man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

A casuist more modest, and who thinks himself more subtile than the former, may allege perhaps, for it has been alleged, that the pope has virtually the keys of heaven, since he has those of the treasure of the church, that treasure of merits which cannot be exhausted, the merits of Jesus Christ that are infinite, and that render therefore the rest of the heap unnecessary being contained in it; that the pope does not pretend to remit the debt which the sinner owes to God on a balance of the account of good and evil actions, but that he pays it by assigning out of this treasure as much merit as every sinner, who applies to him, wants to entitle him to salvation. So father Paul represents the doctrine . . . . "ricompensa il debito del peccatore con assegnare altretanto valor del tesoro.*" Thus, it may be said, the pope decrees in all these cases according to a right which God has established, and not against right by virtue of an assumed arbitrary, unlimited power. But this whimsical hypothesis, if it conld be received, would answer the purpose, for which it is invented by halves at most, for there is something behind much worse than the accusation already brought.

LXXX.

Your divines, as well as ours, affirm very truly of the preceptive parts, that though natural and revealed religion are distinct, yet the difference between them is not a difference of opposition; and that the latter, which enjoins positive duties not enjoined by the former, enjoins none that are inconsistent with it.

* Con. di Tren. L. i.

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But now the same men, who say this very truly when they speak of the precepts of the gospel, say it very falsely when they speak of the religion which their artificial theology has imposed for Christianity, and which is no more like to it in some respects, than talapoism, bonzism, or lamaism are. Some of them hold morality in small account. They place all religion in the observation of such rites and ceremonies as their church has instituted, and in various acts of external devotion. They have been spoken of already. Their whole religion is a system of superstition, unworthy of God as the author, and unworthy to be believed and practised by rational creatures. There are those again who hold morality in no account at all. Though God has given us reason to discern our moral obligations, and a freedom of will to practise them, on which foundation alone it can be said either probably, or plausibly, that we are accountable creatures, and have been such in every age of the world; yet would there have been no such thing as moral virtue, nor as good works, if Christ had never come into the world, according to these doctors: for if moral righteousness was at all times alike conformable to the will of God, in which conformity the very nature of it consists, it must have been at all times alike acceptable to him; at least it could be never unacceptable: but we are told that it is unacceptable, unless it follow justification, unless it be produced by faith, by grace, by inspiration, and a whole process of mystery. Before Christ, therefore, it could not be conformable to the will of God, it could have no merit, nay, it could have no nature, there could be no such thing. This surely is fanaticism, and leads to enthusiasm. There are those again, and of those particularly I mean to speak in this place, who admit that there is a religion of nature and of reason, that is, a primitive revelation which ought to be the foundation and criterion of every other: but in fact they deny what in words they admit; for under pretence of explaining and teaching a posterior revelation, they contradict the first. Their artificial theology does not only take in much of the superstition, and fanaticism that have been mentioned, but imposes for doctrines and precepts of Christianity, and enforces by the sanctions of eternal rewards and punishments such as would prove this revelation to be inconsistent and false, if they were really contained in it.

Nothing can be more repugnant to the spirit of Christianity than violence, persecution, and tyranny. Meekness, and humility, forgiveness of injuries, and benevolence exalted into charity are the great characteristics of this religion. They are so essential to it that many have deemed it on this account a fit profession for some private sect, but a rule impracticable in the

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great political societies of mankind, and in the government of them.* That the clergy deemed it to be so very early, and has acted on this principle ever since, is evident to those who know any thing of the ecclesiastical history. The first missionaries of the gospel were sent forth to preach, to persuade, to convert, and baptise. If they did not succeed, they had no power to call down fire from heaven; they were to shake off the dust of their feet, and to depart quietly. Their commission extended no further. If they did succeed, they established a church in the place under certain orders and regulations of discipline, which seemed to be a necessary consequence of their original, and solely authentic commission, though not expressly contained in it. Among these regulations, that of separating from the congregations, and communion of Christians, and of delivering over to Satan, unless they repented and satisfied the church, such as were guilty of notorious crimes, and such as presumed to teach in those congregations a contrary doctrine, was made by common consent. I say it was made, because it is plain it was executed, by common consent.

But this power became soon confined, in the exercise, to a few persons, and extended little by little, in the application of it, to a multitude of cases neither intended, nor thought of in the first institution. Persons were appointed by the collective body of Christians in every church, that is by every church, to perform the duties which the apostles, that founded these churches, and the first pastors of them however appointed, whether by the apostles, or by the churches, performed. The persons thus appointed did not cease to be members of the same religious society, for the whole congregation of Christians was properly such, any more than persons appointed to military or civil employments cease to be members of the same political society. But the solemn air with which these spiritual magistrates were admitted into their offices by ordination and consecration, if these ceremonies are to be distinguished in honor of episcocacy, gave them a pretence to assume, and prepared others to believe that there was, besides the human appointment, something divine in their institution; that they received the Holy Ghost by imposition of hands, and could transmit the same gift to others by the same

* When Christians became numerous the names of eminent bishops alone were recited out of the diptychs; but when they were few, all that died in the communion of the church were commemorated in this manner. The diptychs were registers originally of the subjects of Christ, who were to be hereafter citizens of the new Jerusalem typified by the church on earth. Excommunication out of one, therefore, excluded out of the other. Hence the expression, that names were written in heaven, and in the book of life, or that men's names were cast out.

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ceremony. Thus they came to be esteemed not only a distinct order, as the priests, the soldiers, and the husbandmen were in the kingdom of Egypt, but a distinct and independent society too in many respects. This I mean. After Constantine had established Christianity in the empire, the clergy were regarded as a superior order in the state whenever it was most advantageous for them to be reputed such; and as a distinct society in it whenever they thought fit, under the name of the church, to exercise powers, and to claim and procure to their order the enjoyment of immunities, or privileges, which they could neither claim, nor have any pretence to enjoy under the first character, and as members of the same state. From hence arose a double absurdity. It was absurd, for it implied contradiction, that the same order of men should be, and should not be at once a member of the same commonwealth. It was absurd, for it was repugnant to all the ideas of order to suffer what is commonly called *imperium in imperio*, to suffer a second supreme legislative power to grow up where a first was already established; and such a power especially as claimed a superior original, and an independent exercise: from which claims it was easy to foresee what happened soon, that the two powers would clash, that a conflict of jurisdictions would arise, and that the ecclesiastical might prevail over the civil.

The principal and most effectual weapon, which the clergy employed to make men submit to this tyranny, was the chimerical weapon of excommunication, forged in the chimerical fire of hell. They employed it first in their spiritual wars, for the state of Christianity has been a state of war from the beginning. In these they excommunicated, and damned one another, till ignorance, superstition, and bigotry realizing chimeras, these spiritual wars became very carnal. The clergy railed, and the laity cut throats. Ecclesiastical quarrels disturbed the peace of the latter empire as much, and caused the effusion of as much blood, as the invasions of barbarous nations. But things grew worse as the church grew stronger, and the scene became more disorderly, and more bloody too, after Charles the Great, when the western church was reduced into a monarchy, and the bishop of Rome became the monarch. In this elevation, with the whole body of the clergy more united, and better disciplined under him, his own ambition increased, and he animated and guided theirs They had made themselves before this time a distinct society from the civil in every country where they had been admitted. His authority over them had been very great, if it had not been entire in every country. He abetted them in their usurpations, and they in return abetted his. But in this age the clergy secular and regular composed not only a distinct ecclesiastical society

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in every particular state, they coalited into one political body, whereof the pope was the head all over the West. The contention for superiority over the civil powers was avowed; and whilst these defended themselves separately, or, whice was worse, whilst they assisted the common enemy against one another, they were all subdued alike. Some of the greatest emperors were excommunicated, and in consequence insulted, oppressed, dethroned. The ecclesiastical order, and, at the instigation of this, all the other orders in their dominions revolted against them. They discovered as well as other princes and states, but they all discovered it too late, how dangerous it is to protect, enrich, fortify, or even to suffer any order of men, who, having a distinct interest, and owing a distinct allegiance, must of course become a distinct society in the state; and especially when this order has the means of turning the consciences, and inflaming the passions of men by religion against the state, and the legal government of it. Gregory the Seventh carried these usurpations and this tyranny to the utmost height, by a more impudent, as well as a more successful prostitution of the doctrine of a future state, than any of his predecessors. From him his successors learned to distribute plenary indulgences with profusion, and to extend particular excommunications into general interdicts. By the first, they sold heaven to the best bidders, and sent men in shoals to eternal happiness. By the second, they condemned whole nations at once, deprived them of the means of salvation, and subjected them in one collective body to eternal misery. The first was a never-failing source of wealth, the second of power. No instance can be produced in all these pro ceedings of any regard to true religion. Virtue and vice were out of the case. Even the *opera operata* of external devotion were enjoined for the sake of form alone. To be truly orthodox, and in a state of salvation, it was sufficient to submit blindly to the authority of the church, and to procure the advancement of it against law, reason, and every moral obligation. To be heretical, and in a state of damnation, it was sufficient to refuse the submission, or to resist the usurpation. This abuse of the doctrine of a future state grew so common in a short time, that it was employed not only in the great struggles, which arose between the ecclesiastical and civil powers, but in every paltry affair wherein the popes had any personal, or family concern; and indulgences and excommunications were let loose by this mitred tyrant to sate the ambition, or avarice of a brother, a sister, a nephew, a niece, a whore, or a bastard.

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LXXXI.

It is true that this exorbitancy has been restrained within two centuries; and this restraint is due to the reformation. We shook off the tyrant and his tyranny at once. You have filed the fangs, and blunted the teeth of the beast. He may mumble and bruise, he cannot tear and bite, and devour as he did. But still the instances that have been cited are proper, and the reflections that have been made just. The instances are proper, because they are instances of the use that was made of this doctrine in the whole Christian church during several centuries. The reflections are just, because though the same use is not made of it now, even in your communion, that was made formerly, yet the same moral arguments are employed, to maintain it; arguments, which cannot be reconciled, as it seems to my apprehension, to the belief of an all-perfect Being.

To demonstrate the existence of such a being by appeals to the inward consciousness of their own existence, to the senses, and to the reason of men, is not a difficult task. But he who has succeeded in it, runs the risk of undoing what he has done, when he appeals at once to the senses and to the passions, of men for the injustice of God's dispensations here; and to their reason alone prejudiced by the former, for the justice of his dispensations hereafter, though the actuality of these must be always hypothetical, and the equity of them not so much as problemetical. The divines of our communion run this risk even more than yours, because when they presume to reason they have not the same reserve of church authority, which yours have, to stop the mouths of gainsayers. They put the truth, or rather the belief of God's existence, in all they preach, and all they write, on the cast of a die. They may confirm their hearers, and, their readers in the doctrine they teach, but they may shake too the fundamental principle of all religion. Nay, they may drive into absolute atheism the man who is weak enough to be moved by one part of what they say, and not weak enough to be convinced by the other. No matter. They not only repeat the moral arguments, and the bold assertions that have been mentioned already, but they tell us sometimes, that the rules of evangelical perfection, such as self-denial, mortification, and others, are of so exalted a kind, that God gave the hope of future rewards to encourage us to the practice of them.* According to this doctrine then he is so cruel a being, that he will make

* Atterbury.

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none happy hereafter who have not made themselves miserable here. The man who will be saved must be initiated into the fanatical austerities of some religious order to make his salvation sure, for aught I can see: and when he is so, he may have good reason perhaps to renew the question Diogenes asked, "num Patræcioni furi quod initiatus fuerit, sors erit melior post mortem, quam Epaminondæ?" They tell us sometimes, that the temporal promises made to a holy and virtuous life extend no farther than to food and raiment, and to daily bread; and they demand, who would be contented with such a scanty provision, when he sees the greater prosperity of bad men who dissolve in ease and luxury?* The proper answer to this question is to be made *ad hominem*, by asking another. Who would not be contented with this scanty provision here on the same terms, and why are not you, why do you, good man, repine at the greater prosperity of the wicked, when you know that eternal happiness is laid up in store for you, and eternal misery for them, who will want even a drop of water to cool their tongues in the next world, after dissolving in luxury here? They tell us sometimes, that without the hopes of another life virtue is bnt a dead and empty name.† Nay there are those who have not scrupled to assert, that if there is not another world, all difference between good and bad is taken away in this world.‡ To steal, to poison, to stab, to forswear, in short, to commit any action that brings either profit, or pleasure, is reasonable: it is so far from being a crime, that it becomes a duty, in as much as it promotes the happiness that is the chief end of the man who commits it. The two first of these doctrines are the very quintessence of theological absurdity, the two last are abhorrent from all the principles of natural religion, and none of them come up to the purpose for which they are advanced. If there is no other life, virtue is but a dead and empty name, they say; and yet the infinite wisdom of the Creator has constituted the state of mankind, and the order of things in this world so, that human happiness rises and falls, is acquired or lost in proportion to the practice or neglect of virtue. Crimes are reasonable, vice becomes a duty on the same supposition that there is no future state, they say; and yet vice is as opposite to virtue in its effects, as in its nature, according to the same constitution, and the same order of things. Neither the immortality of the soul nor future rewards and punishments, can be demonstrated on principles of reason, notwithstanding all the metaphysical, theological, and even geometrical attempts that have been made, with the same evidence as all

* Sherlock, not the righteous bishop, but his father.
† Tillotson. ‡ Wilkins cum aliis.

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our moral obligations may be. The religion of nature, therefore, teaches the latter independently of the former. There may be rewards and punishments reserved to another life; but whether there are, or are not, the religion of nature teaches, that morality is our greatest interest, because it tends to the greatest happiness of our whole kind in this life, and our greatest duty, because it is made such by the will of that Supreme Being who created us, and the system to which we belong. It is false, therefore, and impious to assert, as these divines do, that, if there is no other life, there are no moral obligations; or, as Paschal does, that if there were no other life, the directions of reason for our conduct in this world would not be such as they are.

But to have done with such absurdities for good and all. I cannot close these minutes better, than by observing how wide a difference there is between natural and artificial religion. It has been observed,* that the difference between the things of nature and those of art appears to our great surprise, since microscopes have been in use: and this surprise increases in proportion as they are improved. The things of nature appear to be adapted to useful purposes, wherever these purposes can be discerned; they are elegant, they are finished, and the mind is ravished into admiration. The things of art are adapted often to purposes that are hurtful, and to whatever purposes they are adapted, when we see them such as they really are, they appear to be clumsy, bungling, coarse, and imperfect instruments. A just and easy application of this remark might be made to things intellectual, and especially to those of a theological kind, and to the reasonings of men about them. Thus, to take an instance of the highest and most important object of human speculation, let us reflect once more on the notions that philosophers and divines have entertained and propagated concerning the Deity: for these are the fountains of all religions; and as they are pure, or impure, so must the streams that flow from them be. Right reason neither stops too short, nor goes too far in attempts to frame such notions as these. She frames them in that light which comes reflected from the works of God, and in which alone we may say that he shows himself to man. Imagination, on the contrary, knows no bounds, but proceeds from one hypothetical reasoning to another, till she has framed all those notions of the Deity, which the prepossessions, the habits, the professions, and the interests of the men, who give her this loose, require. The consequence has been, and it could be no other, that natural religion represents an all perfect Being to our adoration, and to our love; and the precept, "thou shalt love the

* By Bishop Wilkins in his Treatise on Nat. Rel.

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Lord thy God with all thy heart," will be effectual in this system. In the other, in that of artificial theology, I apprehend that it cannot be so; for I have learned from Doctor Barrow,* that in the frame of the human soul "the perceptive part doth always go before the appetitive; that affection follows opinion; and that no object otherwise moves our desire than as represented by reason, or by fancy, good unto us. This," he says, "is our natural way of acting; and, according to it, that we may in due measure love God, he must appear proportionably amiable and desirable to us. He must appear to be the fountain of all good, the sole author of all the happiness we can hope for."— Can any man now presume to say, that the God of Moses, or the God of Paul, is this amiable Being? The God of the first is partial, unjust, and cruel; delights in blood, commands assassinations, massacres, and even exterminations of people. The God of the second elects some of his creatures to salvation, and predestinates others to damnation, even in the womb of their mothers. This precept of the gospel, therefore, cannot refer to such a God as either of these: and indeed, if there was not a Being infinitely more perfect than these: there would be no God at all, nor any true religion in the world. But there is most assuredly such a Being; and he who proposes any system of religion, wherein this all-perfect Being is not to be found, may say that he is no atheist, but cannot say with truth that he is a theist.

* Ser. xxiii.

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